THE MUTINY of the FLYING SPRAY

ARTHUR HUNT CHUTE

THE MUTINY
of the
FLYING SPRAY

THE MATE ORDERED THEM TO LEAVE THE WRECK AND RETURN TO THE "FLYING SPRAY"

[See page 199]

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THE MUTINY OF THE FLYING SPRAY

BY

ARTHUR HUNT CHUTE

ILLUSTRATED BY

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DEDICATION

DEAR FATHER:

Ever since you first started, in your study, to read me stories of adventure and travel, I liked best the commanders of ships, and men.

Loving adventure, seeking it far, I always came back to you, to learn that command begins with the man who commands himself.

The way you have kept under a malady of the heart may perhaps cause you to have fellow feeling for "the Captains' Captain," a type of adventurer representing not strength rampant, but weakness triumphant.

It seems to me that there is no finer picture of your precept, "Fight the good fight of faith," than a clipper ship bucking unendingly into the Great West Wind Drift, off the pitch of the Horn. That grim cape at the end of the world is a monument to the master mariner, to his uttermost in faith and courage.

The epic of the Horn represents the conquest of spirit over matter. Because you have always been an exponent of such conquest, I lovingly inscribe this tale to you.

A. H. C.

FAIRYLAND,
BERMUDA.

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The MUTINY *of* THE FLYING SPRAY

CHAPTER I

I LEAVE SCHOOL BY REQUEST

I WAS expelled from Phillips Andover Academy at the height of the gold rush in 1849.

At prep school, my chum, Tug Wilson, and myself were frequent visitors in Prexy's office, until, having worn out our welcome, we were finally requested to leave forthwith, on account of "persistent misdemeanor."

Our last offense was that of boring a hole in the ceiling of the chapel, and letting a barrel of rice down upon the bowed heads of the faculty during morning prayers.

There were a good many chaps mixed up in this affair. But Tug Wilson and I were of

course given the largest credit. Probably, the remembrance that our scholarship was low acted as a determining factor in Prexy's decision to have us leave school for the school's good.

Despite the fact that I was an indifferent student, I loved Andover dearly, and leaving her summarily was not without its pull at the heart-strings.

The stars were shining brightly through the tree-tops as I left the dormitory, before the dawn, to catch the coach for Boston.

I could almost have cried as I discerned the dim outline of the campus, where I should no more be allowed to play for the old school.

A cold, dark winter's morning has a sobering effect on one's spirit. As I walked down the avenue, carrying a portmanteau, my thoughts were gloomy indeed.

A certain letter in my breast pocket added to the sinking feeling of the moment.

As soon as the news of my expulsion came, I wrote my father a long letter, reminding him that they had always had a spite on me at school, and pointing out clearly that the faculty had not given me a square deal.

My father was a peppery individual, irascible in the extreme. Knowing my mother's influence over him, I expected that at her behest, he would at once write a regular scorcher to Prexy, and tell that old crusty-back where he got off.

Instead, he wrote a brief note to me, which now weighed in my breast pocket like a piece of lead.

Under the street lamp, I took out this missive, and read for the hundredth time,

> "You will return home at once. Report at the back door, where the cook will feed you. Then, get out, and get a job.
>
> "Your
>
> "DISGRACED AND DISGUSTED PARENT."

I was heartsick and homesick, as I stood there shivering under the street lamp. But as soon as I read that letter, I began to get hot under the collar.

Father and I never pulled very well anyway, and this message was the limit.

Why couldn't he be fair and reasonable?

Why couldn't he see my side of the case?

His action was nothing less than an insult. It

was carrying unreasonableness just a little too far.

Working myself into a fine wrath, I swore right then and there, that I would never darken our doors again.

Return home at once. Indeed I wouldn't.

I might not be a good scholar, like "Giglamps" and some of the stiffs back at school. "But there's one thing," I told myself, "I've still got the spirit of a louse. I'll show him before I'm through."

With all the bitterness which I had formerly felt against old Prexy now turned against my father, I stormed along with my heavy load.

Mad as a fighting cock, I finally climbed up on top of the Boston coach. A long ride in the biting morning air is a grand tonic for bad spirits. So I found it. Before my journey's end the bitterness had been swept away, and I was beginning to think that perhaps I had been a duffer after all.

I had sworn that I wouldn't go near home, again. But as the thought of my mother came back to me, I didn't see how I could help returning.

"Yes," I told myself, "I must see her, whatever happens. But, there won't be any more of what Father calls stickin' round the apron-strings. I'll show the old boy I can put up my dukes if I have to."

There never was a greater contrast than that represented by my fond parents. My mother, daughter of a wealthy New England family, represented the softening influence. My father, who had come up from the scuppers, in the shipping business, was an exponent of blood and iron.

Mother was given to refer pridefully to her family, the Lawrences. She had reason to be proud of them, "One of the oldest and best," as she said. But, whenever she opened up on the subject, Father would snort.

"People who boast of their ancestors are like a potato, the best of 'em's under ground."

When Mother told of the fine things she expected me to accomplish at Harvard, like my Uncle Eben, Father would burst out.

"I'm a graduate of the Hawse-pipe University; that's better than all the Harvards that ever happened."

My mother's only motive in life seemed to express itself in the words: "Make it easy for Lawrence."

As the only child, I was treated to extreme maternal solicitude, continually hearing such exclaimations as:

"Lawrence, dear, keep your rubbers under the stove."

"Lawrence, darling, don't go out in the cold."

Our home was situated on the bleakest part of Brooklyn Heights, and my poor mother was always complaining, "I'm so afraid that Lawrence will get pneumonia from that horrid wind."

At which, my father would reply, "Bah, the way that nor'wester hits this place is worth a thousand a year in the lad's education."

The over-solicitousness on the one side invariably drew the lament from the other, "You're ruining that boy."

Despite the pungency of my father's character, he was strangely amenable to sweetness and light, so that whenever an issue was joined over my upbringing, Mother was bound to have her way, while Father went off muttering.

"Why didn't we have a girl, anyway. Ellen was never made to be the mother of a man-child."

Through the years there had always been a compromise to maternal whims, but my expulsion from Andover suddenly and decisively ended all that. At last, my father, Benjamin Curtis, put down his heavy, forthright foot, in unmistakable manner, declaring:

"The molly-coddle stuff is ended. That lad has got to make good, or make tracks."

CHAPTER II

THE GOLD RUSH

AFTER a long and discouraging quest, I at last obtained a job as shipping clerk at the office of N. L. & G. Gertridge, an established house in the China trade, with offices at the foot of South Street.

My application was made to Nathaniel Gertridge himself, the head of the firm, reputed to be incredibly rich and incredibly stingy, but no slouch at smelling chances in outward and inward cargoes. The firm had tried their hand at opium smuggling, at the Coolie trade, and every other maritime venture with large return.

Their place of business, filled with the fragrant aroma of spices and teas, carried one away to shadowy visions of strange lands, of pagodas, of hoary cities, and of ancient temples.

But whatever implications were in his house, there was nothing romantic about Nathaniel

Gertridge, a meager, wizened-up individual, who had lost the last spark of humanity in his lust for gain. Widows and orphans of many a ship on the "Missing List" had reason to curse the name of N. L. & G. Gertridge, which was popularly translated, "No Loss and Great Gain Gertridge." The old man did not leave me long in doubt as to the appropriateness of that title.

"So you're the son of Benjamin Curtis. Well, I'm especially glad to see you on account of your father." (My father and he were bitterest rivals.) "And what can we do to serve you?"

"I've come to apply for a job."

"Why didn't you go to your father?"

"He wouldn't accept me."

"Sooner have you learn at some one else's expense, eh?"

"Very likely, Sir."

"Well, since you're so truthful, we'll take you on. They generally charge fifty guineas to teach a youth the shipping business, but as you are the son of Benjamin Curtis, we'll take you on for nothing. How would that suit?"

"Wouldn't suit, I've got to have the price of my board."

"Not living at home?"

"I live in a boarding house at five dollars per."

"Been kicked out by your old man, eh? That's certainly in your favor. Very well, we'll pay you six dollars a week."

"But, Sir——"

"Tut, tut, if you want to get a start, report to Mr. Scraters, our head clerk. And if you want to keep the job, see that you are never late in the mornings. Shipping clerks report at seven."

I was hardly enthusiastic, as I went out to look for Mr. Scraters, but after fruitless searching, this at least was a job. Mr. Scraters, office factotum, who looked like a dried up mummy out of the Cairo museum, told me that I could report the following morning.

"Sharp seven," he croaked, looking over his glasses with unsmiling eyes that I hated at sight. The worst master at Andover would have been a prince compared to that miserable stiff, and I went out anything but elated.

With nothing else to do for the rest of the day, I started to walk aimlessly along the foreshore. My thoughts were gloomy, at first, but who could withstand the magic of that waterfront.

Passing along the East River, everywhere I saw splendid ships in all stages of construction. The shipyards were great hives of industry, where hundreds of caulking mallets rang out a mighty chorus, while a fresh odor of hewn timber, and boiling pitch filled the air with healthful fragrance.

"Why are they building so many ships?" I inquired of a friendly policeman.

"For California, me son."

"And why such terrific rush?"

"An' haven't ye heard the news? California's the place for sure, where they're pickin' up gold by the cartload. They tell me it's nothin' to go out before breakfast and dig a couple o' thousand dollars worth o' them nuggets. California's the place, me son; that's where ye ought to be."

At Piers Nine and Ten, I found a couple of California clippers loading at top speed. There

was something catching in the very air of that place, while the songs and chanteys ran through one's blood like fire.

Everyone I talked with had some new story of that fabulous West. I had often heard of California, Father's ships brought occasional cargoes of hides from here. The place had been a kind of meaningless bog to me. Now, with the touch of gold, it had become another El Dorado.

Everybody along the waterfront seemed to be bound for California. I suppose I met half a dozen who had run away from inland farms, and were now searching for jobs as cabin boy.

One of these young hopefuls, from Vermont, said:

"I'm not wantin' very much. I just intend to stay out there fer a few days, jus' long enough to pick up sixty thousand. Then I'm comin' right straight back."

"Whatcher want sixty thousan' fer, bud?" inquired an old shell-back.

"To buy up all the farms round home," replied the youth, pushing on hurriedly, too impatient to waste time on idle chatter.

Of course, I didn't believe all I heard that morning. But there was something in the restless impatience of that hustling foreshore, that hot, young blood could not withstand.

Coming down to Castle Garden, I stood there looking out at a clipper that had finished loading, and had just dropped down the East River and anchored off Battery Park.

"What's the name of that vessel?" I inquired.

"The *Phantom,* one of No Loss and Great Gain Gertridge's."

"Where's she bound?"

"'Frisco, of course."

It was a wonderful morning to be putting out to sea. There was a crisp, northeasterly breeze, setting the whitecaps dancing down the harbor, and keeping the blue-peter flying out straight against the sky.

Already, some of the hands were aloft throwing off the gaskets. As the crew began to tail onto sheets and halyards, the mate sang out:

"Strike a light on the for'rard hatch there, she's dead as an old grave-yard."

At this, the chanteyman took off his boots, jumped onto the capstan, and burst out:

"I asked a maiden at my side,
Who sighed and looked at me forlorn,
Where is your heart? She quick replied,
Round Cape Horn.

"I said I'll let your father know,
To boys in mischief on the lawn.
They all replied, then you must go
Round Cape Horn.

"In fact I asked a little boy
If he could tell me where he was born.
He answered with a mark of joy,
Round Cape Horn."

A clipper getting under weigh is always a thrilling sight, but this morning, coupled with the songs and fever of the gold rush, it enthralled me. Unmindful of passing time, I watched the canvas set fore and aft, topsails, to'gallantsails, royals, and skysails, were sheeted home as flat as boards.

To another burst from the chanteyman, the inner and outer jibs were run up, the sheets hauled to windward, the main and after yards were braced sharp to the wind. The topsails were mastheaded, and the *Phantom* began to look like some great white-winged sea-bird, fluttering before its flight.

While the anchor was being hove up, I heard again those words, destined to become so memorable throughout the stampeding years:

"Round Cape Horn in the month of May,
To me hoodah! To me hoodah!
Round Cape Horn in the month of May,
To me hoodah! Hoodah, hay!
So blow boys, blow,
For Cali-forn-ee-O!
They's plenty o' gold,
So I am told,
On the banks of the Sacremento!"

As the clipper gathered way in the slack water, the onlooking crowd joined with gusto in the chorus. Swept off of my feet with the crowd spirit, I found myself singing "Round Cape Horn" as loud as the best.

Just at the height of the chorus, next to me in the crush, I caught sight of a pair of mighty shoulders and a bull-like neck that called to mind our football days at Andover. It could not be? But, yes, sure enough! There was old Tug Wilson, singing that gold-seekers' chantey with a zest which left no doubt that he, too, had caught the fever.

On recognizing me, he exclaimed:

"Why, hullo, Laurie. No one on earth I'd sooner see than yourself. Where ye bound?"

Instinctively, and without the slightest premeditation, I answered.

"Round Cape Horn."

The usual flippant expression on Tug's face became momentarily serious.

"D'ye really and truly mean that?"

"I never meant anything more serious."

"All right, old man, I'm with ye."

CHAPTER III

A MYSTERY SHIP

I WAS on hand at our shipping office, next morning, bright and early. Sitting up at a high desk, on a high-legged stool was about the most wearisome and tedious occupation that one could imagine. I was getting sick of the job, before I had been there half a day. But in spite of restlessness, I kept saying, "Spit on your hands, lad, you've got to stick."

Scraters kept a hawk-like eye on everybody, and proved to be a slave driver, our only respite came when he went in for a palaver with the chief. Then, all hands would knock off abruptly for a whispered conversation, which ceased as soon as Scrater's kill-joy countenance reappeared.

In one of the off times, my desk mate, Jones, cast a flood of light on the dreary and meaningless manifest sheet before me, by telling the

prices that some of the items would fetch on the other side of the Horn.

"You talk about gold," said Jones. "There's gold, for you."

"What d'ye mean?"

"Why, I was just thinking o' what some o' the items is going to fetch."

Running his finger down the list, he began to estimate the California prices, which were then at the peak, because of the gold rush.

"Picks, forty-five dollars each."

"Shovels, forty dollars."

"Flour, a hundred dollars a barrel."

"Boots, fifty dollars a pair."

"Sugar, four dollars a pound."

"Playing cards, five dollars a pack."

"That's pretty good profit for the old man," I observed.

"Pretty good. I should smile. Everything this firm put their hand to turns to gold. Did you ever hear of their new clipper the *Phantom?*"

"Aye, I saw her sail for 'Frisco yesterday."

"Well, there's a gold-digger afloat for ye. She cost this firm seventy-two thousand to build,

and already, in her brief time off the ways, she's netted a clean profit of a hundred and fifty thousand. But I'll tell you, Curtis, I wouldn't own her in spite of all her profits."

"Why?"

"Because she's hoodooed. There's been one continual run o' bad luck for the *Phantom* ever since she left the ways. Those who know say that ain't half o' what's in store for her."

"But she's one of the finest looking clippers I've ever seen."

"That don't mean nothin'. Ships are like women, some of the prettiest are also the trickiest. The *Phantom* was started wrong in the beginning."

"How's that?"

"Built too fast for the laws of God. There's such a thing as rushing things just a little too much when ye're after gain. Old Gertridge was out in California when the first rumors of gold came through. He saw that it meant an instantaneous boom in transportation, and hurrying back, overland, at once gave the order to build the *Phantom*. They started to lay down her keel on April first, and if ye'll believe

me, she was launched just sixty days later."

"What?" I burst out, incredulously.

"Honest truth, only sixty days. Building a ship at a speed like that is just asking for it.

"Thirty days after her launching, the *Phantom* was loaded at fifty-five dollars a ton, and outbound for around the Horn.

"There was something kind of unholy in the way everything was rushed, and no one was surprised when, the day after her embarkation, she reappeared off Sandy Hook with her ensign at half-mast, and her skipper a corpse in his cabin, having been killed by the mizzen top-mast yard crashing down upon him.

"With that burning gold fever that's in his blood, Old Gertridge did not wait long enough for common decency, but rushed another skipper, Captain Calvin Peabody, into her, and shot her off to sea at once.

"Peabody was some sail-dragger, and ninety-seven days later he came storming through the Heads of San Francisco, making what was till then the fastest run around the Horn.

"From 'Frisco, he jumped the *Phantom* across the Pacific to Whampoa for tea. Loading at

It Seemed Incredible That I Should Have Gotten Aloft

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forty dollars a ton, she sailed for New York, passing down the China Seas and through the Formosa Channel, then, some time later, she appeared off Borneo, flying signals of distress.

"An American ship finally answered her signals, sending a mate aboard to find out what was the trouble. It was found that soon after leaving Whampoa the dreaded disease of beriberi had broken out among the crew of the *Phantom,* until they were all dead or powerless to navigate from the ravages of the disease.

"At the request of Captain Peabody, sorely stricken, several volunteer seamen and an officer were put aboard the *Phantom* to sail her back to the nearest port.

"First of all, the greater part of the rescuing vessel's crew were sent aboard the *Phantom* to clean her out. Fumigation had to be resorted to because the fo'c'sle and cabin were in a horrible state from dead bodies. The poor fellows that were still alive being too weak to bury their mates.

"With everything shipshape, and new sails bent, the volunteer seamen started to take the *Phantom* to Whampoa.

"Many more died on the way back, but in spite of the ghastly odds against him, Captain Peabody managed to bring his vessel safely into her port of departure. God only knows why he himself didn't kick the bucket; they say it's because he always drinks gunpowder in his rum. Anyway, he came through, alive and kicking.

"No Loss and Great Gain Gertridge have agents in China of their own kidney, who allow no let nor hindrance, even in the face of death. One month later, entirely reconditioned, with a fresh cargo of tea, Peabody took the *Phantom* out again in time to catch the height of the monsoon, and eighty-seven days out from Whampoa he was flying signals for a pilot off Sandy Hook."

Somewhat aghast at this gruesome disclosure, I inquired:

"And is that the same lovely clipper that I saw outbound, yesterday morning?"

"Yes, the same one. A terrific money-maker, and an unhallowed man-killer. Just the kind of packet for a skinflint like Gertridge, who was born without any bowels of compassion."

"And what about her Skipper," I inquired, "I think I know him."

"Oh, Peabody, he's chucked the *Phantom* and gone over to another firm. When they get talking about the iniquity of his old command, he says, 'The half has not been told.'

"Calvin Peabody, with the gunpowder in his rum, is hardly the man you'd expect to be scared of anything, but he sure is scared of the *Phantom.*"

CHAPTER IV

WE APPLY FOR A BERTH

ONE could not imagine two lads more unlike than Tug Wilson and myself. I suppose that's why we were such inseparable pals, each a complement to the other.

The first time I saw Tug was characteristic. On a wager, he was running across the sloping roof of the dormitory in his nightshirt, while a garden party was in process below. As the young ladies wound up by screaming, I looked up to see him just escape breaking his neck by a frantic clutching at the eaves.

One might inquire how I happened to be so easily led about by this harum-scarum. Indeed, my dear mother was continually asking this question, as she deplored the dangers into which he led me.

We two had been accustomed to go off together on long sailing expeditions, which did

much to increase one's faith in Tug. He was given to blustering talk, and Father at first called him a braggart. But the way he handled our yacht outside soon caused respect.

Sailing was my father's ultimate test of manhood. Tug emphatically made good at that test. He won more than one race for us by sheer nerve. I was better at the science of racing, but Tug beat us all the way he would crack on.

Many of the safe-and-sound gentlemen at the Squadron were scandalized by Tug's desperate chancing, saying that it shouldn't be allowed. "First thing you know that young pup's goin' to capsize outside and drown somebody."

At which, Tug would laughingly reply:

"A guy that can't swim in from Sandy Hook ain't got any business on a yacht."

During the period of my office apprenticeship, it was our custom to meet on Saturday afternoons, for sailing trips down Long Island Sound.

Sometimes, we got the loan of my father's schooner yacht, and ventured far out to sea, on which occasions, we liked to imagine ourselves outbound for California.

During our sailing trips, almost our only theme of conversation was the gold rush. All through the week, at our respective offices, we heard unending tales of that fabulous frontier which had become, as it were, the firing line of American business.

Every new rumor spoke of California as the young man's country, and so the more the monotony of the office palled upon us, the more did we yearn for an escape.

Every effort which we made led to the same blind alley. Finally, one Saturday, when Tug and I were about to set off in our catboat, I suggested that we might try for a place before the mast on the *Flying Spray,* one of my father's clippers, due to sail the following day for San Francisco. My especial hope was pinned upon the fact that I knew the skipper, Captain Peabody, formerly of the *Phantom,* who had been a frequent visitor at our home.

Almost instantaneously with the suggestion, we were on our way off down the East River to Pier Nine, where the famous flyer was lying.

The fact that one of Gertridge's ships, the *Meteor,* was on the adjacent berth gave a tang

of excitement to the whole water front.

These two splendid Yankee clippers were loading night and day, preparatory to sailing a great ocean match over the fifteen-thousand-mile race course between Sandy Hook and the Golden Gate.

At that time, the American flag led the world in shipping. These two newest creations were about to join issue for a stake that was nothing less than the championship of the seas.

Long before we arrived at the pier, we caught a glimpse of the lofty truck of the *Flying Spray,* with my father's house flag, gallant over all the water front. She carried three skysail yards across, and was by far the loftiest ship in port.

My father had taught me something of the secret of the slender waist and sharp clipper bows, made for coasting in the light airs of the tropics. But this was no light-air queen; her masts and spars were triple-stayed to stand the mightiest testing of the Horn.

While I was lost in admiration of her splendid lines, I felt a strong hand placed upon my shoulder, and turning, looked into the inscrutable face of Captain Calvin Peabody, a spare man

of military erectness, punctilious to a degree.

He wore a beaver hat and frock coat buttoned tight. There was something suggestive in his tight-buttoned figure, speaking of one who was entirely self-contained. Obviously, his world was within, not without. But under all his reticence, there was no mistaking the master.

Turning on me a pair of pale blue eyes, that carried with them the deep inward look of the sea, he inquired:

"Aren't you the son of Benjamin Curtis?"

"Yes, sir, we used to meet up at our home."

"And what can I do for you, my lad?"

"Well, Sir, this is my friend Wilson. We two chaps want to ship with you for the voyage around the Horn."

A bleak smile came over his face, about as cheerless as sunset on a bitter day.

"How did you want to ship, my young gentlemen, as cabin passengers?"

"No, Sir. We wanted to sign on as sailors before the mast."

The thin lips closed firmly, while he seemed to ponder, then be asked:

"Did your father send you?"

"No, Sir."

"Does he know your intentions?"

"I don't think so."

"Well, under the circumstances, I'm sure I can't see my way clear to taking you. Why not try another ship?"

"We have, Sir, and they've all turned us down."

"I'm not surprised. There are too many first-class A. B.'s clamoring for berths to leave much chance for tyros."

"But we know a whole lot about sailing, Sir," broke in Tug. "I guess we can soon learn to hold our own on your clipper."

"I haven't a doubt of it," answered the Captain, with an approving glance at Tug's shoulders. "But, it seems to me that Latin and Greek ought to be your portion right now. Why aren't you two young gentlemen in school?"

"We were recently expelled from Phillips-Andover Academy," said Tug, sheepishly.

"Well, well, don't apologize for it. I was kicked out of Harvard College myself, twenty years ago. The question, my young friends, is not how you start out, but how you finish up. I

would like nothing better than taking you to sea with me. But, without your father's assent, it's out of the question. Why not ask him?"

"It would be a waste of time," I answered.

"Why?"

"Because he wants to keep me working my penance in a miserable, stuffy old office."

"Ah, then I can see plainly that I mustn't butt in," and with a pleasant "Good day," he left us, chagrined and crestfallen.

Just as we were leaving the wharf, a couple of villainous looking fellows rushed past with a policeman in hot pursuit. I watched them sharply, but Tug had lost interest in everything.

CHAPTER V

THE ARGONAUTS

ALMOST as soon as we got the gold fever, Tug and I had joined a club of young fellows, called the "Argonauts," which was organized to devise ways and means of helping its members to get to the gold fields.

Tug, who had been elected president of the club, expressed its purpose, when at the opening, he said:

"Gentlemen, we've only got one idea in founding this institution, and that's to arrive at the diggings.

"They're making money hand over fist in California, but it isn't the money altogether that we're after. Of course, it'll be nice to get it. But, wherever there's something doing, we fellows have an idea that we ought to be there.

"When there's a football game, I'd sooner be on the field than on the grandstand. I guess it's

the same with this gold rush, we want to go in while the goin's good."

The meeting cheered their heads off at this sentiment, but as the months slipped past we saw that it would take more than cheering to pay the piper.

The night of our disappointing interview with Captain Peabody, we went to a meeting of the club, in anything but good humor.

When one of our biggest mouth-artists had just gotten through telling us for the hundredth time what he intended to do, Tug suddenly jumped on a chair, declaring:

"Boys, I'm through with this hot-air association. Six months after we founded this club; we've just as many members as we started with, always ready to sing, 'Oh, Sussanah!' at the top of their lungs, and cheer tall talk.

"Now, after all this time, we haven't any of us got one inch nearer to the gold.

"That guy that just sat down has been blowing off more steam here every night, and if he doesn't look out, he's going to bust his boiler.

"For the last time, I tell you fellows that I'm bound for California, overland, Panama, or

round the Horn; I'm going to get there. For us fellows that mean business, the time has come to quit talking and start doing.

"If any of you feel the same as I do, you'd better chuck the pipe-dreaming. We ain't exactly kids, and if we go in for action, even yet some of us may be able to have our little get-together out there as gold-rush millionaires.

"But if we keep on the way we're going, first thing you know we'll be sipping gruel in the old men's home, and talking of those great chances that we missed away back in the days o' the Forty-nine.

"That's why, boys, I'm going to quit right now, as president of this club. I'm through with California Associations that haven't got anything but chewed air to show for it."

CHAPTER VI

BOUND TO GET THERE

ON a Saturday night, Tug resigned as president of the "Argonauts." Early the following Sunday morning, long before anybody was awake, there came a loud rapping at our front door. As my room was downstairs, I got up to answer the knock.

On drawing back the bolt, there was Tug waiting on the step, wearing the same rig which we donned for our week-end sailing trips.

"For great Cæsar's sake, what are ye doin', togged out like that for, at this time o' morning?"

I thought at first that this was only another of Tug's innumerable jokes, but there was a grim look about him, which I had often noted when Exeter had us fellows backed up against the five-yard line. Somehow, that look in his eye convinced me that the boy who would have made

a funnism out of a funeral was for once in deadly earnest.

"Get your sailing togs on, Laurie, and come along."

"Where'll I come?" I inquired, somewhat incredulous.

"Never mind fool questions, step lively and do as I tell you."

When I reappeared in a rough suit, with oilskins over my arm, he said:

"Have you got any money?"

"Fifty dollars."

"All right, bring that."

More mystified than ever, I obeyed, and together we set out toward South Street, a three-mile walk from my boarding house.

As we swung along together, Tug sounded me out as to the seriousness of my intentions to join the gold rush.

"Do you really mean business, or have you just allowed yourself to be swept off of your feet like all the rest of the ninnies?"

"I guess I'm as serious as you," I answered hotly.

"All right, then, why haven't you made good?

You're still marking time in New York, aren't you? Acting as a poor little quill pusher, when you might be helping yourself to large slices of real life!"

"You've got no cause to preach."

"That's just what I'm coming to. We fellows can keep on preparing and preparing till the cows come home. The only guys that get there are those who'll take a chance, the plungers. You believe that, don't you?"

"Aye."

"Well, so do I. And I've made up my mind that if we two are going to do anything, we've got to begin to take a plunge. Everlasting shivering on the brink ain't good enough."

"But what's a man going to do, if he hasn't got the money?"

"Money! Aw, you make me sick, Laurie. Like every other rich man's son, you're always whining, money, money, money.

"Did the first guys that crossed the Atlantic book a passage? Did the first of the pioneers overland buy a ticket? No, Sir, not on your tintype. They put up their dukes, and paid the

price by fighting their way through. That's what we're going to do. At least, if you're game to stand by me."

"I'm with you, Tug, till Hell freezes. But spit it out, how in the world do you expect to do it? If we can't work our way as sailors, if we can't afford to buy a ticket, and if we can't join the overland trail, how then, in the name of Mike, are we going to do it?"

"Do you trust me, Laurie?"

"No one standing in shoe leather I'd trust more, Tug."

"You wouldn't be afraid to follow me?"

"I'd follow you to Van Diemen's Land."

"All right, that settles it."

But in spite of assurances, I was still nonplused.

"But, how——"

"Never mind buts and hows, here's the craft that starts the first lap of our journey."

We had arrived at the end of the pier, where we kept our catboat. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry as Tug pointed down at the little cockleshell.

"To California in that!" I exclaimed aghast.

"Don't be a fool, ye start in a rowboat to get to a liner, don't ye?"

"Yea."

"All right, then, hop aboard and step the mast."

Thoroughly incredulous, I did as I was bidden, and so, without further ado, we stood out toward Governor's Island, about the most inconspicuous departure imaginable for our golden Odyssey.

CHAPTER VII

THE "HARD CHANCE"

AS we sailed seaward, my heart was beating in a hectic manner. There was an exultation of movement, together with an apprehensive facing of the unknown.

Tug left the tiller in my hands, probably to keep me occupied.

As we passed the Brooklyn shore, I recognized our home on the Heights, with its lofty situation, and its cupola, so popular with ship-owners of that time. Looking back at the familiar scenes, I was not without misgiving thinking of my dear mother and wondering if I should ever see her again.

Through the Narrows and down the Outer Bay we sped, the little catboat ramping along before a full breeze that forced us to single reef the mainsail, as soon as we came into the choppy waters of the lower bay.

The beautifully wooded landscape on either side, with its wild appearance, and the highlands of Navesink to the southwest, and the opening ocean out before filled me with a sense of awe. One must be outside in a little boat to get that feeling.

The dawn coming up across the sea floor flooded our pathway with molten silver and flowing gold.

There was a keen tang to the air that set one's blood tingling, and did much to allay misgivings. As for Tug, misgivings he did not know. Incorrigibly gay, he kept on singing one after another of the popular songs of the gold rush, without which there would have been many a gay soul missing in the Forty-niners.

Halfway across the lower bay, Tug relieved me at the steering, setting his course for an estuary at the far end of Coney Island. Noting the purpose with which he steered, I inferred that he had a definite goal, and sure enough, there inside the shelter of the estuary we came across a type of craft used by the Gloucester fishermen of that period, known as a pinkie.

The pinkie was as unlovely as some slatternly

old charwoman. But she appeared to be quite adequate for rough service.

As we ranged alongside, I noticed on her counter the name, *Hard Chance of Marblehead.* With her pitch bottom, stout timbers, and stubby mast, she certainly looked as though she were created to stand any amount of smashing about in tough weather, a veritable storm bird.

"What d'ye think o' her, Laurie?" inquired Tug, as we made fast and clambered aboard.

"She's no private yacht," I replied with a touch of irony.

"No, thank God, she isn't. She's a deep-sea breadwinner, the kind that you can put your trust in when it's lookin' dirty."

If we had discovered the finest cruiser in the New York Yacht Club, Tug could not have shown more delight. As I looked her over, I must confess that she began to command my respect also.

The *Hard Chance* was about fifteen tons. She had no rail nor bulwark above the deck, the only protection being a narrow waist, about eighteen inches in height.

The cuddy, a small apartment forward, con-

tained two berths, and a fireplace built of brick just abaft the foremast. The chimney was made of wood and plastered on the inside to prevent its taking fire.

An old Andover jersey lying on the bunk and a couple of boxes of stores dumped down hastily led me to infer that Tug had been there before.

Bending over, I began to place the stores in a locker: four quarts of molasses, ten pounds of fat pork, twenty pounds of flour, twenty pounds of hard-tack, five pounds of coffee, and a bag of potatoes. A couple of barrels of water and a harness-cask of salt horse completed our stores. This did not represent the possibility of a very elaborate bill-of-fare, but Tug went on to say that it would answer the purpose, and we also could buy fresh supplies along the coast, to say nothing of the fish that we might catch.

Coming out of the cuddy, we began to examine her gear. All the time Tug kept up a running fire of comment, praising everything like a person who was trying to make a sale.

"She carries only foresail and mainsail, but you can take it from me, Laurie, she's a peach of a sailor in heavy weather."

"You talk as if you had been out in her before."

"You bet your sweet life I have. I ain't putting all our future on any crazy sea-coffin. No, Sir, I know what I'm doing before I take a chance, and I tell you, I'm ready to trust this tough-looking little craft to get us there, and I'm doing it on something more than hearsay."

Little by little I began to succumb to Tug's eloquence, and as I felt the sturdy lurch of the incoming rollers, there was awakened within me the thrill of the wanderlust, but there was still something that held me back.

Noting the undecided look upon my face, Tug burst out:

"What the dickens is up with you, Laurie? Will nothing ever satisfy you?"

"She suits me to a T," I answered.

"Well, what's up?"

"I was just wondering where you got this craft. Was she loaned to you? Did you rent her? Or did you buy her?"

"Of course I didn't."

"All right, are you stealing another man's boat?"

"I ain't stealing," answered Tug, hotly. "And what's more you can take that back."

"Aw, cut it out. If you are about to take this boat, I say, either you got it right, or you got it wrong. So speak up and tell us how you got it."

Tug was hot-tempered in the extreme. My first insinuation inflamed him for the moment, but it was as quickly gone, and with his old twinkle, he inquired:

"Possession's nine points of the law, ain't it?"

"I s'pose so."

"All right, that's how I come by this pinkie. I put this jersey in her last fall to kind o' stake out my claim, and as I've been tending for her the past six months, without a sign of anyone else near her, I say it begins to look as if she was mine."

"But, where's her rightful owner?"

"Search me. Maybe in the graveyard, maybe in the penitentiary. Wherever he is, he hasn't got any use for the *Hard Chance*, that's sure, and as we two are bound to get out to the gold fields, I say, we've got to take the first thing that comes along. By good luck, it happens to be

this handy little craft, just pining to wash the barnacles off of herself."

"But, you'll never get around Cape Horn in her."

"Who said we would?"

"How are you expecting to fetch California, then?"

"From Panama, of course."

"But I won't steal another man's boat."

"Aw, be sensible for once. Who's stealing her? I've been using this hooker for six months. By the law of possession she's mine. I'm going to use her a little longer, that's all. After we arrive at Panama, we'll leave a ticket on her, saying, 'Returned with thanks.' But, don't you worry about the poor owner, he's gone to the last port, that's what's happened, and Tug Wilson ain't the kind to let his old pinkie rot for nothing."

"And if he isn't dead?"

"All right, if he ain't when we come back with our pile we can do the handsome, and present him with a few thousand for the loan of his tub. That's fair enough, ain't it?"

There was no doubt about the pile that we

would bring back and so I assented, and without further ado, Tug began to make sail.

As the *Hard Chance* plunged and pitched at the leash, I felt a strange yearning to fly away. Gazing out where the edge of the sky met the edge of the sea, I felt like a bird that had suddenly discovered wings. We had only our moorings to slip, and nothing could hold us.

And so when Tug sang out, "Let her go!" obedience was instinctive.

Making our cat fast to the mooring buoy, I cast off the splice of six-inch cable, and the *Hard Chance* darted out of the mouth of the estuary, and laid over gleefully to meet the first lift of the open sea.

We were off for California.

CHAPTER VIII

"SAFETY LAST"

OUR pinkie was full of the sheer joyousness of life, as she ran down the wind, scattering sea beauties into a wake of milk-white foam. With the sturdy craft gamboling and dancing over the deep-backed swells, I came to realize something of the vivacity that might be locked up in a vessel.

"What do you think of her, now?" inquired Tug.

"Almost human."

"Just made to order for us chaps. Couldn't have struck it better."

"How's she steer?"

"Want to try?"

"Sure."

With sheets well off, and boom trailing into the seas, I exchanged with my partner, taking a place to weather, where I might get the best grip on the tiller.

"Watch her so's she don't broach to, or pay off."

"Aye, aye, she'll sure take some watching," I answered, struggling with both hands, and gripping with both feet.

"You'll catch on soon. But of course she'll require more strength than a yacht."

My chief difficulty was to prevent her running off the wind. Several times Tug called to me. But gradually I got the hang of it. With the buoyancy of that vessel underneath my grasp, I began to taste the sheer exhilaration of the morning. The very winds and seas seemed to be laughing with us.

Once, I was able to catch Tug at the jib sheets, in an unguarded moment, and slapping the tiller hard to meet an oncoming crest, I drenched him thoroughly, to the accompaniment of huge laughter from us both.

Nothing could have offended at that moment. We had sailed out of New York harbor scores of times, but never with such overflowing happiness. At last, we were off on the trail of gold. It seemed too good to be true.

"How do you like this, Laurie?"

"Wouldn't miss it for thousands."

"Better than a high stool in the office, eh?"

"Never again," I answered fervently.

As we ran to seaward, Tug divulged to me his plan to get to California. His idea was for us to skirt the coast, so as to be able to run in for dirty weather, and finally, at Panama to abandon our vessel and join the trek of gold seekers across the Isthmus.

"But what are we going to do on the other side?" I inquired.

"Never mind about the other side," answered Tug, with lofty disdain. "One problem at a time is quite enough. The only thing I'm sure of is, we're on our way, and what's more, we're going to get there. Ain't nothing can stop us."

Tug said the last with such conviction that I could not fail to be impressed.

For three hours we held our course, running straight to sea. By noon, we were about twenty-five miles offshore.

"This is quite far enough," I cautioned.

"Aye, aye," sang our my chum, and we hauled up onto the wind.

Running was decidedly the best point of sail-

ing for the pinkie. A heavy swell was making, and now, close hauled, she began to stuff her nose into the big green seas, and bury herself forward, until at times, sitting aft, I lost sight of her bowsprit completely.

"A regular diving bell," sang out Tug.

"Ain't the diving stuff I'm scared of. It's the way she's banging that gets me. Just look at that one, will you."

Plunging down another sea, she hit the trough a shivering smack.

"I hope she doesn't keep it up. A few hours of that kind of stuff would be enough to knock the boltheads loose, and ring the masts clean out of her."

Clouds of spindrift mantled us, while with every blow the pinkie trembled ominously.

"She's smashing too hard, close hauled. It might be better to keep her running," said Tug.

"Nothing doing," I answered. "First thing you know we'll be blown off soundings, and in a nice mess, if we want to turn tail and scoot for harbor. If you ask me, I think we're too far off already."

As the jib sheet broke loose again, Tug con-

descended to put on his oilskins, before going forward. But in spite of oilskins, he received a thorough soaking.

Coming back from his second trip to the bowsprit, he began to look like a drowned rat. His constant wettings had ceased to amuse us.

"This infernal poundin' and bangin' ain't good enough," I allowed.

"Got to expect rough stuff."

"Dunno about that. She's straining terribly, and knocking the calking out o' her forrard seams; first thing ye know she'll be down by the head."

"Rats."

The strain of steering the stubborn craft in a strong wind and a beam sea gave me a chance to imagine things. The more I thought of it, the more attractive became the idea of seeking shelter.

"She's too deep in the water to suit me, Tug."

"What d'ye mean?"

"I'm beginning to think that perhaps we can't trust her as much as we thought. Looks as if it might be the sensible thing to 'bout ship, and beat for harbor."

"You ain't goin' to be a quitter like that, are ye?"

"Better be safe than sorry."

"She's safe enough."

"Dunno."

"You're gettin' cold feet."

Tug faced me with such furious challenge, that I quenched my misgivings for the time being, and at his suggestion went below to prepare a meal, while he relieved me at the tiller.

CHAPTER IX

"FLYING SPRAY, AHOY!"

SALT pork and hard-tack washed down with hot coffee did much to give me an at-peace-with-the-world feeling, and I came out on deck after my repast feeling more at ease.

"All right, Tug, I'll relieve you, and you can go below for your whack of grub."

"Righto."

"Are you hungry?"

"Nearly famished, old man."

Taking my place at the tiller, I told myself that I had probably been too apprehensive before dinner, because of the need of food.

But in spite of new assurances, the everlasting pounding of the bows was still there, sounding a devil's tattoo with ominous regularity.

When Tug came back on deck again, even he was forced to exclaim, "Ye gods, what an infernal row she's kicking up!"

I had been studying her actions, and an idea was coming to me of how to humor her.

"With such a strong wind, I guess the trouble is we're giving her too much canvas."

"You've got a head like a carpet tack, Laurie. What's up we didn't think of that before?"

Lashing the wheel hard down, the two of us went to it, taking a reef in mainsail and foresail. With this task accomplished, the vicious pounding abated temporily, but she was deep in the water, and before long she was making just as bad weather as ever.

Seeing a bigger sea coming, Tug, who had resumed the steering, tried to force her head to meet it, but she was too slow in stays. Something was holding her down by the head, there was no buoyancy.

"Come on, up to it, old girl!" Tug shouted, coaxingly.

She tried to fetch it, but was too logy.

"Look out!" I shouted, leaping for the rigging.

Tumbling over the forequarter came the big fellow, shouldering his way aft, burying everything, Tug Wilson included.

Hanging onto the tiller for dear life, Tug

passed out of sight in a seething maelstrom of white and green. Then, as the sea passed on, the stern came heavily out of it.

Shaking himself, like a great Newfoundland dog, Tug wiped the brine from his eyes, squinted at the binnacle box, and rolled the pinkie onto her course again.

Swinging myself back onto the deck, I could not withstand the contagious merriment with which my chum met the situation.

"What 'ye think this is, Tug, the Boston swimming pool?"

Still laughing, I went below to get my oilskins. There was something so ridiculously funny in the way Tug took his last bath, that we both kept on laughing, in spite of the dismalness of the situation.

Out at the tiller, I heard the note of a song, and was thankful for such an irrepressible companion.

"That's right, Bo, spit on your hands," I shouted.

"Can't keep a squirrel on the ground," came back the answer, as my chum resumed his jaunty and light-hearted singing.

I was just starting back on deck, with my oilskins, when the sight of water seeping up through the cuddy took all the singing clean out of me.

Grabbing a bucket, I began to bail.

"Cuddy's half full of water," I called out.

"Came aboard with last sea; ye can soon fix that. Better keep slide fast after this."

I was bailing calmly enough, at first, but gradually my speed increased, while a panicky feeling began to clutch at my throat. There seemed to be no such thing as gaining a mastery of the situation.

Thoroughly alarmed at the implication of that gaining water, I set to it with might and main, but the harder I bailed, the higher the water of the cuddy seemed to be creeping.

Down there in that uncertain light, the lapping blackness looked ominous as the face of death. My breath came in quick, short gasps. What was mere man pitted against such overwhelming odds!

With a sudden sense of my own ineffectiveness, I called out to my companion, and in a twinkling, Tug came jumping down beside me.

I did not have to tell him the trouble, it was written plainly.

"She's going to founder!"

For once, Tug's voice sounded with the slightest quaver.

For myself, I had already thrown the sponge. Out of that mad orgy of futile bailing, I had emerged utterly whipped.

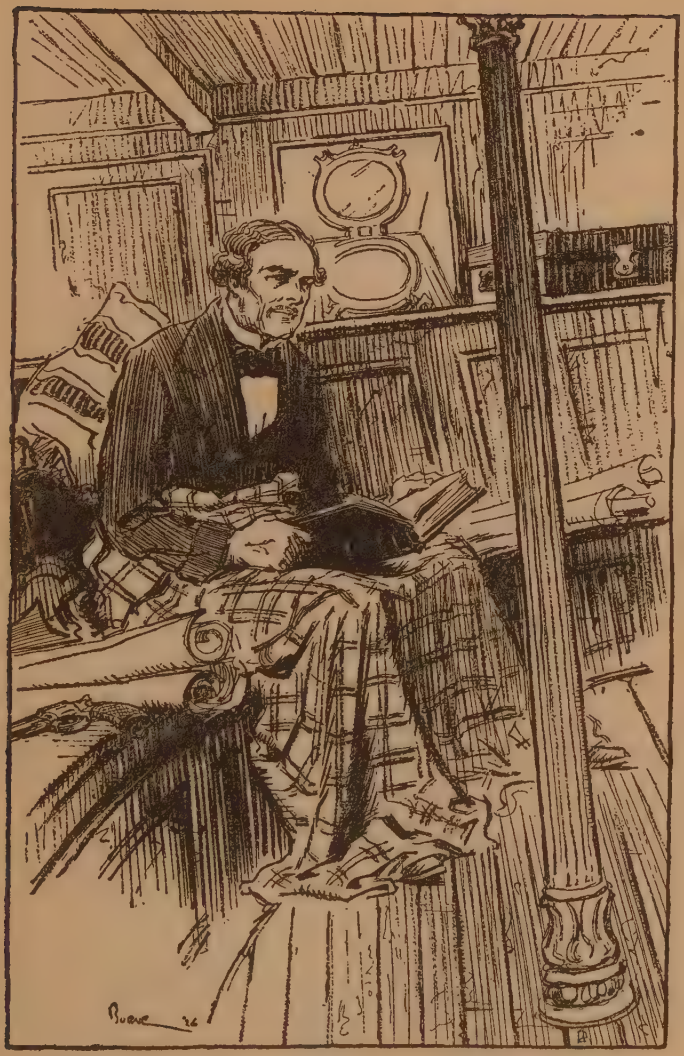
"What's the use?" I wailed. "The jig's up."

We were now too far offshore and in too sodden a condition to even think of putting back.

I had the feeling of one who had been trapped and miserably cheated. There was a sickening regret that I had not acted upon my own best judgment, a couple of hours before. Here we were like cornered rats. Everything seemed so sickeningly futile.

As in a lightning flash, I saw my mother at home, waiting for my return, with ever increasing apprehension. I could have cried at the anguish of that picture, but in the next instant there was a fit of madness that I should have been done in so foolishly.

With that fit of madness, a cold, calculating



I Found the Captain Reading the Bible, a Large Pistol at His Side

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spirit seemed to come upon me, or perhaps it was the heartening example of Tug Wilson, as good as a whole team, that wrought the change. At all events, my reasoning power returned, and I ceased to be a rat in a corner.

"Hey, Tug, a little less energy, and a little more brains is what we're needing."

"What d'ye mean?"

"Man the pump, of course."

The pump was a crazy affair, but far ahead of the bucket, and soon we had the water pouring out in cascades. It came out at first black and slimy, which was quite all right. Then, later, it came white and clean, which was altogether wrong, indeed it couldn't have been worse.

At the sight of that clean brine pouring out of the scuppers, I knew beyond a peradventure that we were doomed. Beating in toward the shore, in our present condition, was out of the question. Hammering into those head seas would have sent us to the bottom in brief order.

"Nothing for it, Tug, but to let her run, and hope to get picked off before dark. It we don't meet somebody out here, our name's Dennis."

"While there's life there's hope," panted Tug.

"Mighty slim chance," I muttered to myself, as I took the tiller, and headed her off before the gale.

To our little craft, the following seas seemed mountain high.

To Tug, at the pump, I shouted encouragingly:

"Don't let her get down by the stern, old man. If we can only keep from getting pooped!"

All through the afternoon we spelled each other, but in spite of our best efforts, it was apparent that the water was slowly but surely seeping up. Even the Herculean strength of my chum was nothing against that giant.

As the afternoon wore on, wind and sea were both alike going down. But as the weather moderated, the water in our hold was still gaining.

Toward twilight, the gale had blown itself out entirely, and we rolled in an uneasy calm, with the pinkie awash to her scuppers.

Almost dazed from exhaustion, I stood my successive turns at the pump. I had already far exceeded my physical power, everything now was done on nerve.

It seemed as if through all eternity I had been manning that everlasting pump brake, fighting that everlasting sea.

As my strength grew weaker, a tiredness of soul and body began to act like an anodyne. The world seemed to be fading away. But I never gave up hope, for something within was continually saying:

"It's not the end! It's not the end!"

All through the afternoon, we had been scanning the horizon in vain hope of a sail. Visibility was low, and we could discern nothing. Throughout it all, Tug kept repeating, reassuringly:

"We're sure to meet some one. We're right in the track of the outward-bounders."

As night came on, I began to think that the sunset was the last that I should ever see. The thought of life's pitiful incompleteness was again seizing me with a poignant feeling, when unexpectedly, Tug shouted:

"Look! Look!"

With senses unnaturally keen, I turned, and beheld against the sunset sky a cloud-piled heeling clipper, racing grandly down upon us.

"Hurrah! It's an outward-bounder," shouted Tug, in sudden ecstasy.

But I did not trust myself to speak. I felt that there was not yet a certainty of life, only a slender hope.

Waving my coat as a signal, I prayed that their lookout would not miss us.

Whatever uncertainty there was vanished as she came on, looming up incredibly with royals and skysails. Never before had I seen such beauty as that soaring clipper against the sunset. I could have cried at the sight of her for with her came the gift of life.

As she drew nearer, there was something strangely reminiscent in her fine-sweeping lines, as light as the swoop of a swallow. Where had I seen her before? Where had I admired those selfsame lines? Then, in a twinkling, it flashed upon me. Cupping hands to mouth, I shouted:

"Flying Spray, ahoy!"

Just as the oncoming clipper bows seemed to threaten, we saw the mainyard backed, and almost instantaneously there sounded a whir of block sheaves, and a splash as her quarterboat took the water.

Came the steady clack, clack, clack of oars on rowlocks, our song of rescue, and two minutes later, we were taken off the doomed pinkie, leaving her wallowing impotently in the backwash.

Another two minutes, and we had been whipped up from the mizzen yard, onto the clipper's quarter.

After tuning one's mind to death, life came back with an inexpressible shock. Could it be that we were to see our homes again? The tears were coming unbidden, when I heard the voice of Captain Peabody.

"Where in the world were you lads going?"

"Bound for California, Sir," answered Tug.

"What, in that cockleshell!" As we stood looking over the rail, we saw the so-called cockleshell grating against the side of the clipper, and then, like a thing of paper, it broke in two, and submerged.

Even the immutable face of the skipper betrayed emotion.

"You were off for California in that?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Well, I must say I admire your spunk better than I do your sense. Now, since you've risked so much, you'll have to see it through. There's no such thing as turning back. We'll enter you as apprentices, and if you've got the stuff in you, we'll be making officers out of you."

I was about to thank him, when he cut me short.

"That will do. And now, Mr. Duggan, will you show these lads the spare bunks in the midship house? And see that they are roused out for the muster, along with the rest."

"Aye, aye, Sir," answered Duggan, about the hardest looking thug that one could imagine outside the walls of a penitentiary. I felt antipathy to him at sight.

"Come on, youse," he growled, and started to lead us forward.

They were already tailing onto the braces. With a rattle of blocks the mainyard swung to the wind, and the *Flying Spray* was under weigh once more.

On entering our quarters in the midship house, I stumbled awkwardly across the sill, at which

Duggan's heavy boot was vigorously applied, astern.

"Git in there, ye suckin' admiral. And don't waste no time when I calls the muster, or ye'll git a hunk o' holystone at the heels instead of a coffin."

CHAPTER X

PICKING THE WATCHES

WE were not allowed to rest long. Soon, the bull-like voice of Duggan sounded: "All hands, lay aft."

"That means the muster fer pickin' the watches," said one of our bunk mates.

For myself, I did not feel much like turning out. From the terrible ordeal in the open boat, I was feverish and exhausted, while every muscle in my body seemed to be afire.

We had eaten very little since coming aboard. The cook had given us some coffee, and a pot of greenish-looking stuff that they called "salt horse," rancid enough to turn the toughest stomach. We quietly dumped over this loathsome mess, and in spite of famished feeling, went hungry.

"Sail" and "Chips," our two veteran bunk mates, laughed at our rejection of food.

"Ye'll soon git over that, me sons," said Sails. "Turn up yer nose now. But just wait till ye git down to the roarin' winds o' fifty south, and salt horse will taste finer to ye, a feast o' kings."

Sails was an odd-looking customer, squat and decrepit, with a gray beard smeared with tobacco juice. Bent from the service of the sea his three-score years rested heavily upon him. But in spite of aged appearance, he was sprightly enough at turning to.

He had been sleeping in his bunk when the first call sounded. Then came a rousing knock, followed by Duggan's threatening tone:

"Wake up, ye bloody idlers, out wid yez, and bring them suckin' admirals wid ye fer the muster aft."

As we came out on deck, the *Flying Spray* was holding strongly to her course. The wind was springing up again, blowing in long gusty squalls. As I gazed at the black shimmer of the seas racing past, I shuddered to think of the awful fate from which we had been snatched.

All hands trooped aft, and stood in the pale gleam of the lantern light, while above them on the poop loomed the shadowy figures of the

afterguard, the two mates bending over the rail giving various directions, the Captain standing aloof, like some god who watched from a higher realm.

As soon as Duggan and the bos'n had roused out all hands, the mates came down the ladder, and the picking of the watches began.

Throughout the entire procedure, the Captain walked up and down, imperturbable, aloof. He did not condescend to utter so much as a single word.

Hell Fire MacDonald, first mate, every now and again let out a threat to make one's blood curdle, while on the fringes of the mob, Duggan barked incessantly, like some attending sheep dog.

Mr. Blandy, second mate, depended upon the other two for noise, but there was an unmistakable sarcasm in his voice, and I made up my mind at once that I would far sooner have the roaring Hell Fire.

After everyone else had been chosen, the Captain came to the edge of the poop ladder and inquired:

"What about those two lads?"

"We haven't assigned 'em yet, Sir."

"All right, take your choice."

At that, I was selected for the first mate's watch, and went over to the port side, while Tug was chosen by Mr. Blandy, and went over to starboard.

That meant that for the rest of the voyage, I belonged to the port watch, under the belligerent MacDonald. Duggan, the third mate, was also in my watch, and so there was no doubt as to the bulldozing which I might expect.

According to the custom of the sea, "The Captain takes her out, and the mate brings her home." That is, the first watch outward belongs to the Captain's, or starboard watch, and the first watch homeward is taken by the mate's, or port watch. Of course, in reality, the second mate stands the starboard watch.

Accordingly, at eight bells, Mr. MacDonald sang out:

"Relieve wheel and lookout. Starboard watch go below."

On returning to the midship house, my two elderly companions had already started to turn in. They were called the idlers, since it was

their lot to spend all night in, while the rest of us were to watch on and watch off.

Chips, the carpenter, a gray, quiet, fatherly old man, took an especial interest in me from the start. As I was still sitting up, he exclaimed:

"Better turn in, young feller. First thing ye know they'll be rousin' ye out, and ye'll have no sleep.

"The port watch'll be on till midnight. Your turn comes from midnight till four, that's the middle watch, what some calls the churchyard watch, 'cause a feller feels at his worst 'bout that time. From four to eight is the morning watch. From eight to twelve is the forenoon watch.

"After midday comes the afternoon watch, twelve to four, then the first and second dog watches, four to six, and six to eight.

"Then comes the night watch, eight to twelve, the watch we're on now. Eight bells o' the second dog watch is what begins the night at sea——"

Chips was still talking on regarding the lore of th sea, when I went off to sleep. It seemed as though I had hardly closed my eyes before I felt some one shaking me into wakefulness.

"What's up?" I inquired.

"Your watch on deck," answered Tug.

"Eight bells just gone, better tumble out quick, before your friend Duggan catches you napping."

At the mention of Duggan, I lost no time in obeying. As we lined up at the waist to muster, everything on deck seemed to be in commotion.

"Aloft there, to overhaul t'gallant and royal buntlines," sang out Mr. MacDonald.

There was a sudden rush to obey. I, myself, was starting up the mizzen shrouds, when just across the sheerpole, the mate grabbed me.

"Down here, son, you ain't for that stuff yet."

A half hour's sweating up on sheets and halyards followed. In this I was able to take my part, getting on fairly well, I thought, until Duggan espied me, and tailed onto the end of my halyard, yelling:

"Git onto it, ye parlor beauty, ye couldn't pull the fleas off a wet tarpaulin."

At the sudden surge of the rope, I found myself sprawling onto the deck, heavy sea boots trampling over me, and Duggan taunting:

"Out o' the way there, ye bloody poop orna-

ment, if ye can't pull, then git out o' the way o' men what can."

After the half hour's sweating up, with sails taut and true, the men began to make themselves comfortable under the lee of the poop. As there was nothing else to do at the moment, this seemed perfectly proper. But, Mr. Hell Fire MacDonald, a Bluenose Bucko from Nova Scotia, was not the kind to foster ease.

In order to make the horrible example all the more arousing, he waited until the "sons of rest" were well placed, then suddenly jumped upon them, bellowing:

"This bloody hooker ain't no rest cure. Keep movin', ye lazy lubbers, keep movin', there ain't goin' to be no lime-juice sleepin' on this deck!"

As Hell Fire encountered several languid and indifferent individuals, I saw him suddenly leave the deck and land upon them with both fists and both feet.

The bucko must have weighed well over two hundred, and yet he was agile as a kitten. Before his terrific lashing kicks the watch mates began to melt like water.

Everyone in the watch was judiciously pair-

ing off with his mate and starting to tramp up and down, in order to escape the ire of the mate.

One group alone appeared to be refractory, and as the bucko started for them, I heard a snarling yell, followed by the instantaneous flash of a pistol.

CHAPTER XI

PACKET RATS

QUICK as lightning, MacDonald aimed a lash in the direction of the gun. The finger upon the trigger was not so quick as his terrific kick, and the weapon went hurtling over the rail.

In the same instant, a dozen knives flashed forth, and the redoubtable mate was faced by unexpected odds. Nothing daunted, he closed in upon them, bare-handed:

"Put up them knives!"

"No fear, ye bloody Bluenose."

Speaking for the rest, a sort of ringleader had edged his way to the front. I could hardly believe my eyes that he was the virtual leader of these wild, hairy, brawny men. All the rest, in red shirts and black-ball caps, looked like doughty sailors. This individual, who now assumed their leadership, was a pale, wizened-up

city weakling, a sort of ogre face with a pair of ferrety rat eyes. His mouth was the biggest thing about him.

In spite of the vast disparity between them, this miserable looking runt held the giant mate at bay, pouring forth a flood of abuse.

The mate interlarded his speech with oaths, but they were pungent and strong compared to the filthy language of this creature.

The mate's hesitation had been that of surprise, and then, recovering from the unexpected, he advanced resolutely and knocked off the low cap pulled down across the other's eyes.

This move evidently carried some preknowledge, for as the cap fell off there was disclosed under the moon, the most hideous disfiguration that I had ever seen branded upon a human being.

Across the forehead of this creature, tattooed in China ink and gunpowder, was a hideous looking dagger that extended clean across his forehead.

At sight of this revolting brand, Mr. MacDonald was seized with a mad rage.

"What are *you* doin' here?"

"Signed on fer the trip," answered the other, sullenly.

"*You,* on a Cape Horner!"

"I want to git to California."

"And how'd ye get out o' jail? D'ye know me?"

"No."

"Never seen me before?"

"No."

"All right then, hold out your hand."

At this order, with an impudent leer, the fellow held out his right hand. Once again, I received a distinct shock, for the thumb had been torn away, leaving a ghastly disfiguration.

"How'd you lose that finger?"

"Knifed."

"You're a liar. That thumb of yours was chewed off by his dog, the night you murdered Captain Wallace aboard the *Orion.* You're One-thumbed Jerry, that's who you are."

As the mate made this last accusation the face of the wretch was suddenly contorted.

"Aye, I'm One-thumbed Jerry, an' what 'ave yez got to say about it?"

"I'll make you wish you'd never been born,

before you're through sailing under me, ye dirty low-down packet rat. Come on, hand over that knife ye've got hiding behind ye."

At this last, there was a snarl of hate, and almost before one's eye could follow him, the wretch had leaped upon the giant MacDonald, stabbing in blind fury.

As One-thumbed Jerry made his ferocious leap, all the rest of that evil-looking pack came on at his heels.

With the sudden irruption of knives and curses, it certainly looked like the end of MacDonald. In the first rush, he went down, as though he were being borne completely off his feet. But it was only a ruse to escape the knives. In another instant, he had seized One-thumbed Jerry, and trussed him up in such a manner that he served the giant mate both as a weapon and as a shield. In this manner, he fended off the mob, and then flung the wretch in his arms back amongst them with a sickening thud.

The brave mate, single-handed, had gotten control of these ruffians, when, in stepping backward, a bucket was surreptitiously shot under

his feet, and again he went down sprawling. In the height of the mêlée, one could not discern things clearly, but it seemed to me that the bucket came from the direction of Duggan, third mate.

Just as Mr. MacDonald tripped, One-thumbed Jerry was recovering himself. Throughout the awful punishment which he had received, not a word escaped him, and now, with incredible resuscitation, he picked up his knife, and pressed hard by his gang, started to drive the mate back against the weather shrouds.

Realizing the overwhelming odds, the mate tried to maneuver so as to gain the height of the poop, but the packet rats were too canny for him. Seeing that their opponent had his back to the wall, One-thumbed Jerry shouted:

"Now then, boys, rip the bloody tripes out o' 'im!"

The mate was fighting for his very life. I thought that he was about done for, when out of the cabin alleyway burst the tall figure of Captain Peabody, armed with a bar of iron piping, which he had picked up on the run.

Swinging the heavy iron with both hands, the

Captain dealt a successive blow on the heads of each one of the four men that were closest to the mate.

The ruffians dropped in their tracks, two of them dead on the spot.

At sight of the resolute Skipper, One-thumbed Jerry suddenly found it expedient to fade away, while from somewhere came the valiant Duggan, making a great show of chasing them back single-handed.

It was found that the knife wounds of Mr. MacDonald were superficial, and because of his preternatural toughness, he would have carried on till the end of his watch. But the Captain insisted on his retiring, while for the remainder of the night the Captain himself trod the poop, with a loaded pistol tucked away beneath his watch coat.

CHAPTER XII

A TAUT HAND

AT six bells, the morning watch, with the sun peeping over the sea floor, the Captain ordered all hands aft.

By the light of day, I had a chance to observe the villainous and forbidding aspect of the crew. There were a few English and Norwegian sailors, honest enough fellows, but the bulk of the foremast gang were Liverpool Irish packet rats, about the toughest variety of deep-water man. These ruffians generally kept to the Western Ocean packets, oscillating between the dance halls of Paradise Alley and the dives of Cherry Street. According to Chips, they were now swarming into the Cape Horn service, because of the lure of California gold.

Never in all his experience as a master had Captain Peabody had such a dangerous gang palmed off on him by boarding-house runners. During the night there had been a serious dis-

cussion among the afterguard as to the advisability of turning back to discharge these jailbirds, and take on a new crew.

This especial gang which attacked the mate, known as the "Bloody Forties," were of such unsavory repute that even Hell Fire himself shrank from the idea of a voyage in their company.

Chips told us how they had argued over it for a long time, but Captain Peabody was not the kind to start out on a voyage, and then turn back for a new crew, especially since it would have meant a great expense, as the men had all received an advance of pay.

With the feverish desire for speed, at that hectic period, loss of time seemed more to be deplored than loss of life.

Chips, a quiet man, a lover of peace, had pointed out to the Skipper:

"I never saw such a set of pirates in my life. I advise you to get rid of them, Captain, at all costs."

"Never fear, I'll draw their teeth!" said Peabody, and as his word was law, all further discussion was at an end.

Addressing the crew from the poop, that morning, the Skipper said:

"Men, last night you made a dastardly attack upon the first mate of this ship. According to maritime law, you have subjected yourselves to five years in the penitentiary, and to five thousand dollars fine. If I was a mind to enforce the law, in your case, I could take you back and have you lodged in jail for the rest of your days, where doubtless you belong.

"But it is not my purpose to turn back. This clipper is bound for California, and those that do not do their duty will quickly find that they will be summarily dealt with.

"You have the good fortune to find yourselves aboard one of the finest clippers that sails the seas. Here you will receive good food in abundance, your quarters are good, your watches are well manned, your work will not be heavy.

"Do your duty and behave yourselves, and you will find this a happy ship. But God have mercy on the mutineer, the maligner, or the hanger-back!

"When we ask you to walk aboard this packet,

we expect you to run. When we ask you to run we expect you to fly. We are going to be in 'Frisco before the *Meteor,* and we aren't going to do it with anything but real sailors.

"Now then, men, you know the rules, pass by the carpenter's shop and have the points of your knives broken."

"What for?" called out One-thumbed Jerry, in shrill insolence.

"You heard the order."

In spite of much grumbling and with very bad grace, the command was at length obeyed.

As the mutterings and threats around the carpenter's shop reached the Captain's ears, he called:

"Lay aft again, all hands."

They came back in dogged manner.

"Men, if there's any growling to be done on this packet, let it be done in the fo'c'sle, and not in my hearing.

"I say once more, you are to obey orders at the jump. No muttering or loitering will be tolerated for one instant aboard the *Flying Spray.* This is no lime-juice timber droger.

"Don't shamble your feet as you walk, but

raise them and move quickly. When you are spoken to, answer so as to be heard."

"Aye, aye, Sir."

"The saucy manner which some of you have assumed is I know encouraged by an impudent wretch who is leading you astray."

Looking One-thumbed Jerry fair in the eye, the Captain then addressed him directly:

"You, you black-and-blue striped jailbird, I recognize as the ringleader of the Bloody Forties, thirty of whom I see before me right now.

"I know that you have banded yourselves together, and according to Mr. MacDonald, you took an oath in Mrs. Riley's den to clip the wings of this bloody old packet, and give her Skipper a swim.

"You think that the lid of Davy Jones' locker has been open long enough for me. Therefore, you intend to do as you please, and have your own way aboard this ship.

"Well, I'm here to tell you that I'm your master. Now then, men, stand where you are, while the officers search you for hidden weapons."

During the search, an unusual crop of revolvers, brass knuckles, bowie knives, and knuckle-dusters were extracted, after which the fo'c'sle was also thoroughly searched, and still other deadly instruments were forthcoming. The whole lot, at the Captain's behest, were dumped over the side.

At the end of all this, there followed the most gruesome event of the whole proceedings. The two dead packet rats, that had made the murderous attack upon the mate on the previous night, still lay in their tracks, where they had fallen.

As the Captain said that he could not bring himself to utter the burial service over their remains, he offered sandstone and canvas, and a prayer book to their mates, to conduct the service, if they so desired.

This offer was met by a shout of derision. Whereat Mr. Hell Fire MacDonald, himself, came down from the poop, and unceremoniously dumped the two bodies into the sea.

CHAPTER XIII

SUSPICIONS

TUG and I had a chance to compare notes as we came together in the dog watch.

Tug was standing it the better of the two, but that was not saying much, as we were both sore, scarred, and aching from our first twenty-four hours before the mast.

Our hands were in a terrible state from the constant hauling and pulling at the ropes. Some of the blisters seemed to eat to the very bone, while the sea water added to the corroding influence.

All over our bodies were scars and bruises where we had tumbled across the decks or collided with barbarous impediments, such as capstans, bitts, and iron deadeyes.

"Talk about your football scrim," said Tug. "It's got nothing on this old wind wagon for

rough stuff. How are you standin' up to it, old man?"

"I feel as if I'd had all hands trampling all over me, ever since I came aboard."

"And how do you like your mate?"

"He's tough. I guess they don't make 'em any tougher than the Bluenose. But he's fair and square, and I've kind o' got a feeling that if I play the game, I can depend on him to come across.

"How do you like your mate, Mr. Blandy?"

"Don't like him at all, one of those sarcastic Englishmen who acts as if God hired the earth from him. I wouldn't trust him either; he's quiet, but he's tricky."

"Tell ye another I wouldn't trust."

"Who?"

"Duggan, the third. I hated him the minute I clapped my eyes on him."

"Aye, and I don't believe he lost any love on you, Laurie, the way he gave you the toe of his boot for a glad hand."

"He's nothing but a low-down plug-ugly, masquerading as an officer. What's got me

guessin' is where did we see that Duggan and One-thumbed Jerry before?"

"You're using your imagination."

"Imagination nothin'. D'ye remember the two rogues that we saw chased by the police that afternoon we were talkin' to Captain Peabody at Pier Nine?"

"Yea."

"Well, I'd take my oath on it, that those are the two we saw leggin' it."

"Fiddlesticks."

"I'm sure I saw that same dagger tatooed on the first fellow's forehead as he ran past us."

"That may be, but how do you link Duggan up with him? The other fellow that was being chased that afternoon had a beard, and was dressed like a city swell. He certainly had nothin' in common with that hard-case third mate."

"Did ye ever hear of such a thing as disguise, Tug? Naturally an escaped convict is going to use every trick to cover his tracks. Unless I'm mistaken, Duggan and One-thumbed Jerry were accomplices in some crime, probably murder, and that's why they were on the run that day."

"You've got to show me."

"You wouldn't be any good as a detective, Tug, you don't use your eyes. You failed to catch sight of the dagger on the first guy, and you missed altogether the ugly jaw on the fellow at his heels. Beard or no beard, I say that jaw belonged to Duggan."

"Well, if you are so cocksure about it, you had better tell the Captain."

"No fear."

"Why not?"

"Because, it's no good to start reporting things until you've got absolute proof to back it up. If we went to him now, the Skipper would just put us down as busybodies.

"But I'll tell you all the same, that Duggan and One-thumbed Jerry are brother crooks. I noticed last night when they were attacking the mate, that Duggan played mighty soft, until the Old Man appeared. Then, all of a sudden, when the gang had started to fall back, you'd 'ave thought that he was a roarin' lion."

"Aye, and now that you mention it, I believe it was from the third's direction that I saw that

bucket shot out to spill the chief, when the packet rats were just on him."

"Well, there's one thing, Tug. That dirty Duggan may be able to wipe his boots all over me, to-day. But before I'm through, I'll call his number."

"Hope you will, Laurie. But I just want to give you one word o' caution, watch your step when you're dealin' with him, for you're up against a bad actor."

CHAPTER XIV

A HARD SCHOOL

MY first few weeks at sea were one continual nightmare. Gone the dreams of gold, gone the lure of adventure, gone the joy of movement. Life had become a chain-gang drudgery, an endless toiling in which the night was as the day.

Sleep I missed more than anything. Again and again I would roll into my bunk all standing, asleep in a twinkling, in spite of soaking boots and oilskins.

I had never known what it was to be physically tired before. Now I ached in every muscle of my body, while outraged nerves cried out incessantly for the rest that never came.

When Tug Wilson, in one of the off watches, started to build air castles about the gold of California, I groaned:

"Don't talk about it. I'd give all the wealth

in the world if I could only get one solid night of sleep."

Even Tug, the seasoned athlete, found his muscles outraged, taking some time to adjust themselves to such unaccustomed strain. While I was a hundred times harder hit. The four hours below seemed barely enough to keep soul and body together.

A tall clipper with her leaning spires of canvas had always seemed to me a dreamlike picture. Now I came to realize something of the back-break and the heartache behind that picture.

Every time I turned in, I felt as though I could never rise again. Fortunately, some one was always handy to rouse me from my nine-fathom slumber.

One night, after my awakener had called me, I arose and started to dress, only to doze off again, in the midst of the act.

When the crowd mustered aft, my friend Joe Parish reported me absent, in a hesitating manner, exclaiming:

"I don't think he was called, Sir."

At this Duggan snorted:

"Wasn't called! What's he think this is, the ruddy Astor House? By—I'll call him, good and plenty!"

On entering my quarters, the bucko found me with one leg half out of the bunk, where I had fallen back exhausted as soon as I got my trousers on, completely dead to the world.

A find like this was pure joy to Duggan. Grabbing me by the leg, and swinging me like a sack of potatoes, he yanked me across the sill, and pitched me headlong into the lee scuppers.

Before I had time to recover, he was kicking me along the deck.

"Git on, ye gentleman's son in disguise, ye ain't in no rest cure on this hooker.

"You're one o' them what can't even rustle the grub fer yer own belly; just live on yer Pa, an' look wise, eh? Well, by the leapin' cripes, here's where we'll learn ye to lean on yer own dinner."

As we started on the regular round of toil, always the bucko was just one step behind.

"Come on, now, haul away. We ain't goin' to have no corpses on this deck."

Once, while we were bending at the lee fore-

brace, I thought that my time had come. We were hauling away with a swinging lilt, when the clipper went over on her beam ends, and a solid green sea broke inboard over the lee rail.

With that engulfing mountain toppling down upon me, instinctively, I opened my mouth to shout, as I did so, drinking my full of choking brine.

In the next instant, under that mountain of water, we were all swept clean off our feet. Those near the rail, with only a little slack on the brace, were held down so that the sea broke clean over their heads.

Kicking out frantically, I could find nothing but drowning immensity. I was sure that I had been swept clean overboard, when I found myself tangled in the rigging, then, tumbling back upon the flooded deck where some one fished me out, exclaiming:

"Some swimmin' pool, eh, bully boy?"

I was just getting my feet, when Duggan, drenched from a similar immersion, was rushing at me.

"Git a move on there, ye bloody pup. Tail onto that brace wid the rest o' them."

As this order was emphasized with the toe of a heavy sea boot, I lost no time in obeying.

This bucko treatment, calculated to put the fear of God into a man, certainly did add snap and vigor to one's movements.

A few moments after the incident of the boarding sea, all hands were sweating up again, the mate calling his orders to "heave" and "belay" as if nothing out of the ordinary had occurred.

To see Duggan standing there, red faced, with streaming oilskins, one could not help admiring his tremendous driving power. He belonged to the same school as Hell Fire MacDonald. Yet I admired the first and loathed the third.

As soon as the tautening of the braces was complete, my watch mates had a respite. But whenever the others were comparatively unoccupied, Duggan saw to it that all kinds of unnecessary jobs were trumped up for my benefit. All the time there was a feeling within, that he was working off a spite on me.

He would walk along the pin rails, throwing down the ropes, yelling:

"Boy, here, coil this up."

When a task was completed, as neatly as possible, he would wait until I was not looking, and then, after he had made a mess of the whole thing, he would give me a box on the ears, snarling out:

"What d'ye mean, doin' a dirty job like that?"

"I just coiled them up all right, Sir."

"None o' yer back slack, or I'll break yer neck. Coil 'em up again."

Four hours of this kind of nagging found me ready to drop in my tracks. Toward the end of the watch, I felt as though I would have to lie right down on the deck. But Mr. Bucko Duggan saw to it that I kept moving.

"If ye're goin' to do any dyin' around here, young feller, ye're goin' to do it on the hop."

At length, just as eight bells struck, to usher in the longed-for rest, the Captain, who had come on the poop, sang out:

"Hold onto your watch for a moment, Mister."

As we paused, standing in the waist, I heard an old shellback mutter:

"There's a regular ring-tail-snorter comin'."

Off to weather, I could see the water black

with a squall of wind, preceded by a wicked looking line of creamy foam.

In a moment, everything was in an uproar.

"Let go your royal, and t'gallant halyards."

"Stand by your clew lines."

"Haul down the outer jibs."

"Clew up the mainsail."

"Now then, all hands aloft and furl mainsail."

In the first rush for the shrouds I hesitated, I had thus far escaped this dread assignment.

I was still hesitating, when Duggan leaped upon me.

"What ye gawkin' at? Up ye go!"

With the bucko at my heels, I was driven up through the lubber's hole, and out onto the mainyard, where I dug my feet into the footropes, and clung on for dear life.

It seemed incredible that I should have ever gotten aloft. Between death through beating and death through falling, I chose the latter. But the minute the man-driver turned his attention elsewhere, I was in a panic.

Joe Parish, next to me on the yard, noticing my giddiness, put his arm around my shoulder,

"Steady, matey. Keep your grip on the jackstay, and ye're safe as a church."

When that roaring squall struck, I tasted a terror in the wind more terrible than drowning seas.

I could hear nothing but the deafening crash of slatting canvas, while that demon of a mainsail kept up its frenzied efforts to send me plunging backwards.

With the yard whipping at every jump, it seemed as though all hands must be catapulted into the seething foam to leeward.

Fighting, clawing, fisting with that bellowing mainsail, I had my finger nail torn clean away. In excruciating pain, I cried aloud. But crying and sobbing, I continued with the rest to grapple inch by inch, until that endless canvas was subdued. There, on that reeling yard, I got my first lesson in real fighting; there, in horrific flashes, I came to see the meaning of "naked fists against a naked ocean."

Coming down from aloft, it was Joe Parish, God bless him, who assisted me, and once on deck, carried me dead spent to my bunk.

By the time the call came for turning out for

my next watch, I sank back utterly exhausted. I was telling Chips my troubles, when Duggan burst into the midship house like a cruel north wind.

"At it, again?"

"I can't move, Sir."

"Can't, eh?"

With a grunt and a heaving lift, I was pitched out onto the deck, and piloted along by the toe of a boot, while a grieved voice wailed:

"God 'ill surely punish me, if I don't punish ye, fer growin' up so useless!"

CHAPTER XV

MASTERY ALOFT

ON the first night, I had started to clamber up the mizzen shroud when the mate detained me. My only trip aloft was the harrowing experience under Duggan.

During a quiet spell one afternoon, Mr. MacDonald called out:

"Here, boy."

"Yes, Sir."

"Go into my room, and fetch my pipe."

When I came up, a moment later, with the desired pipe, he looked at me keenly.

"How old are you?"

"Eighteen, Sir."

"Never had to work hard, before?"

"No, Sir."

"Well, there's just one thing I want to say to you, young feller, whenever you get an order aboard this packet, don't make no mistake, you

got to do it. Growl you may, but go you must. Now, then, d'ye think ye could climb aloft?"

"I'll try, Sir."

"All right, then, up you go."

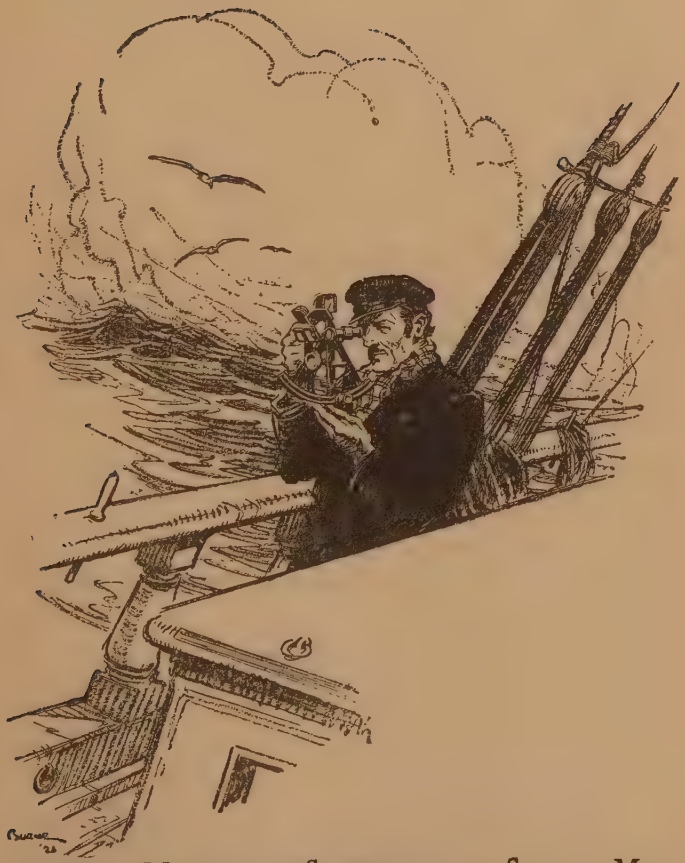
At this hearty bidding, I swung myself across the sheerpole, and started upward.

"Hold onto the shrouds an' not the ratlins, an' keep yer eyes off yer feet."

Arrived at the head of the lower rigging, I was stopped by the futtock shrouds, that stretched outward to the edge of the maintop. Climbing here, a man's head would be further out than his feet. This didn't look good enough, and I decided to go through the lubber's hole, straight up, when there came a shout of remonstrance.

"None of that, now. Over the futtocks with ye."

Taking my life in my hands, I chanced it. Crawling across the maintop, at the end, was the worst shock; with nothing but my arms to pull me up, there came a frightful inadequacy. For a moment, I felt as though I were swooning and slipping backward, then, panting and desperate, I swung myself into safety.



During a Moment of Sunshine, the Skipper Made the Observation

[See page 145]

Here, I found myself on top of the bellying mainsail. The deck seemed too far away to even estimate, I was just starting to look down, when a stern voice floated up:

"What are ye waitin' for?"

Flinging myself into the topmast rigging, I started again. Reaching the topmast head, the ropes leading to the crosstrees looked more alarming even than the futtocks.

Again I paused, and again a skysail-yard voice came booming upward:

"What's the matter now?"

There was no escaping that remorseless urge, and after another nightmare, I found myself standing on the dizzy crosstrees. This seemed like the ultimate height, but the voice from below came up with the old Hell-Fire-Mac-Donald urge:

"Go on! Go on!"

At the t'gallant masthead, nothing remained above me but the royal and skysail masts, looking like two coach whips.

"I couldn't dare to tackle them," I told myself.

But some one else thought otherwise, and the familiar chorus sounded:

"Get along with you."

Realizing that perhaps I now stood in need of more than moral urge, Mr. MacDonald came clambering up toward me, negotiating futtocks and crosstrees, like some burly bear.

In a jiffy he was beside me, exclaiming:

"My, my, how clumsy you are. But we'll soon show you. Now, then, follow me."

Somehow, it was far easier to follow MacDonald than Duggan. A monkey could not have swarmed up that royal masthead any easier than he did. Without a second's delay, I committed myself, and started after.

For the briefest moment, I hung with one hand only, a hundred-odd feet of empty air beneath me. Somehow I made the royal, and then, in a burst of desperation, I attained the skysail yard.

Pointing to the little ball of gold that surmounted everything, he said:

"Ye see that truck, son?"

"Aye, Sir."

"All right, shin up and touch it."

"Go you must," already these words seemed to have burned themselves into my being. The

night before I had shuddered at the mere thought of the mainyard, and now, at the mate's bidding, I shinnied up, and put my hand upon the main truck, one hundred and eighty feet from the clipper's deck.

In that moment, with the wind in my teeth, a fellow to the wheeling sea-birds, I found myself laughing out in sudden exultation.

From my eerie perch, the sea was indeed an alluring panorama, stretching to lose itself in the infinite blue, where the rim of the sky arched down upon it.

Sliding down to the skysail yard, I began to take in the whole scene of the ship, whose tier on tier of bellying sail lay beneath me, glorious in the morning sun. I wondered how such an avalanche of canvas could be borne by such a tiny deck as that appearing below.

Standing there, as easily as though he stood on deck, Mr. MacDonald began to chat about taking in sail, and how to make a decent stow, while I plied him with questions.

"Supposing the sail flaps and gets your knees out from under the yard?

"Supposing in the heavy rolls you start to

slide along the footropes, what do you do in cases like that?"

"Do? Why ye just hang onto the sail for all you're worth. You'll save your life, and get the sail furled, too. But, God help the guy who can't forget himself aloft, he's bound to get a hist. Forgettin' yerself is the only way to be safe up here, sonnie."

As we descended, leisurely, Mr. MacDonald pointed out the various ropes and spars. When at length I stood upon the deck, I was surprised at how wonderfully easy it had been; indeed, everything seemed to come easy under the leadership of MacDonald. "He's a prince," I told myself, "even if he is a bucko."

After the first exacting experience, going aloft came to be second nature. Before the week passed, I had the satisfaction of mastery in a new kingdom,—the kingdom of the air.

CHAPTER XVI

A LONG TUSSLE

PERHAPS I was getting too cocky in the high spaces. Perhaps I thought that I had learned everything. At all events, pride goeth before a fall, and Duggan was there to work humiliation.

After instruction under the mate, work had fallen to me aloft, the same as to all the others. At which, it became Duggan's especial delight to keep me continually at it, racing up and down the rigging.

"Hey, there, you poop ornament. Run up and pass a couple o' rovings on that foretops'l."

No sooner would I be back on deck than he would be at it again:

"Aloft wid yez, an' put some stops on them royal and t'gallant buntlines."

Duggan was always searching to find the weak spot in my armor, and as time passed, I

gloried in the fact that he could no longer faze me. But I had counted too soon.

One night, I came on watch, to find that a long run of fair weather had broken. In the shrieking, howling blackness, only the foaming crests could be seen, rushing madly past. The big clipper was jumping into it up to her knightheads, when Duggan, with a shout of glee, sang out:

"Aloft wid yez, my bhoy, an' furl the main royal."

On account of the pitching and plunging of the vessel, going aloft that night in the blustering dark, was a man's-size job.

The wind was bad enough on deck, but up there on the royal yard it seemed a thousandfold worse.

This was really the first time that I had attempted to furl a royal alone, and now, up there in the howling blackness, the sail seemed far bigger than I had imagined.

It required nerve to let go the jackstay and put both hands out and grab at that mad and flapping monster. With feet well apart, with knees jammed against the underside of the yard, I set myself to the task.

A full gale whistling in my ears, and the sail continually blowing back and threatening to knock me off the footropes were pleasant incidents of that boisterous night.

The rule on a yard is one hand for the ship and one for yourself. But here two hands did not seem sufficient for the task appointed.

I knew enough, from Mr. MacDonald's instruction, to tackle the bunt, or center of the sail, first. Digging my fingers into the iron-hard canvas, I dragged it in, inch by inch. After long effort, I seized the gasket, to make fast, when, in a sudden squall, it blew clear, and again I had the whole thing to fight over again.

In the exultation of the struggle, I performed prodigies of strength, but alas to no avail, for always the gains were snatched away at the crucial moment.

After an hour of breathless conflict, I at last succeeded in making the gasket fast around the bunt. Panting and spent, I waited until I had gained my wind again, and then edged my way out to weather.

The sail was blowing back over the yardarm,

making it imperative on this dangerous perch to keep a firm hold of the jackstay, while I had to be ducking and dodging continually, to avoid the slatting canvas.

The feeling of exultation with which I took up the job had passed away. Something of the same futility that had come over me at the pump aboard the pinkie, now possessed me.

But there was a difference. This time, at least I refused to be stampeded; no matter what I felt like, I kept telling myself:

"I'll do it, yet."

Sometimes I got the sail ready and the gasket was just out of reach. Sometimes the sail was too vicious to hold. Sometimes the squalls themselves forced me to loose everything, and grab on for life.

Doggedly and painstakingly, I fought to regain what I had lost, until with utter despair, I began to think of quitting. Then, at the thought of Duggan crowing over me, something caused me to keep on fighting, even after every last ounce of physical strength was gone.

My back was aching, my fingers raw and

bleeding, I was drenched with perspiration, and buffeted all over with thrashing canvas, but even that could not finish me.

On my dazed senses, the mad royal had gradually taken unto itself a human form, it was the loathed Duggan that I was fighting, and even in the bitterness of punishment, I gritted out between my teeth:

"I'll show you, yet!"

The dawn was streaking a dirty gray, when I finally put the last vanquishing touch to that endless job, and more dead than alive, started slowly to descend.

CHAPTER XVII

COMING THROUGH

AS I came down from my two-hours' battle with the royal, Duggan, who would have been there to crow over me, if I had failed, was not in evidence.

I was dog-weary, but there was an exultant feeling, for something within told me plainly that in that contest aloft I had won my first decision over the hazing bucko.

Mr. MacDonald stood on the poop, as I swung back into the waist. Although I was in his watch, he had thus far paid little heed. No matter how much Duggan hazed and bullied, he seemed utterly oblivious to me, or my misfortunes. Now, a look of strange new interest stole in his face.

Leaning across the poop, he summoned:

"Come here."

A moment later I ran up the poop ladder.

"Yes, Sir."

The mate did not answer for a moment, he seemed to be studying me closely, while a V-shaped wrinkle in the corner of his eye told that the examination was not unfavorable.

"Well, you ain't done too bad, young feller, looks as if ye're a chip off the old block. I've been watching ye ever since ye come aboard. From the look o' ye, at the start, I thought we'd have to have a nursemaid, but ye've got the stuff in ye, no mistakin' it.

"Were ye scared, while ye was tryin' to muzzle that royal?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Scared blue, eh?"

"That isn't half saying it, Sir."

At my candid confession, the mate smiled.

"Why I was askin' ye, sonny, is because it reminds me o' the time your father and I was boys together aboard the brig *Alert*.

"We was ordered aloft in a squall to handle a t'gallant sail. It was almost our first effort. Your father was right next to me on the yard, tremblin' so's I said: 'Ben, I believe ye're afraid!' 'So I am,' says he, 'and if you was half as afraid as I am, you'd drop off the yard.'

"Some ain't got sense enough to be scared o' anything. It's the scared ones, who've got guts enough to hang on, that get there. Master yerself first, sonny, an some day, sure as guns is iron, you'll be master of a clipper.

"I must say, I like the way you have started in, and if you care to come aft, in your watch below, I'll be glad to teach ye navigation, and other subjects belonging to a master mariner."

I thanked him, and that very afternoon, began under his tutelage, a course in navigation that was to last right round Cape Horn.

On deck, Hell Fire MacDonald was a brute, the hardest variety of a hard-case Bluenose. But, in the offwatches, in his room, he was the most patient and painstaking of teachers.

He had formerly been a captain himself, but had lost his command on account of drunkenness. This reverse preyed upon him, and he was continually warning me to profit by his example.

Mr. MacDonald was a graduate of what he was pleased to call, "The Sticking Tommie University." He ran away from his home in

Cape Breton, and went to sea on a fishing schooner, when most boys were just starting their A B C's. A cook taught him how to read and write, and with that modest beginning, he started to study by himself, lying in his bunk at night, reading by the light of a candle placed in what the fishermen call "a sticking tommie," hence his phrase "the sticking tommie university."

Teaching himself in off times, between the fishing, he mastered the various grades of arithmetic. Later, he took up higher mathematics, gaining not a smattering but a mastery of the subject.

As a preliminary to my own studies he gave me a thorough and painstaking review of algebra and geometry.

Hell Fire MacDonald was a rare mind, and would have made his mark as a professor in any college. Hidden under the rough exterior was a born pedagogue. I never had an instructor at Andover Academy, or anywhere else, who could impart knowledge more clearly, and with greater exactness.

Between us, there sprang up a mutual sym-

pathy and regard, which did much to encourage me in my studies.

Tug was also invited aft to join us in these impromptu classes. But while I more than satisfied the expectations of our teacher, Tug proved himself anything but an apt pupil, and finally was dismissed with the remark:

"You may have lots of beefsteak, but your head is as thick as the starboard capstan. Get out on deck, life's too short to waste time tryin' to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear."

After Tug's departure, my instruction went on alone, and with greater speed.

No matter how friendly we were below, out on deck the mate was always the man of iron. Said he:

"At sea, a boy's got to learn how to stand on his own pins, and how to fight with his own dukes. Self-reliance never comes to the guy who's wet-nursed through the rough stuff."

Never for an instant did the mate interfere with Duggan's bulldozing. I saw plainly that it was up to me to take care of myself.

After the mate had once taken a hold of me, nothing important was ever done without his

telling me the why and the wherefore. He never sheeted home a sail, or braced a yard without an explanatory remark, if I happened to be handy.

Watching the behavior of the clipper under all conditions I was gradually perfecting myself in the art of handling sail. This, by the way, was how they made future captains for those Yankee flyers destined to establish so many record passages in sail.

Once I asked the mate why he took such pains with me.

"So you'll know yourself, just exactly how to act, and just exactly what your ship will do. Ship handling ain't learned any other way but this, me boy."

As time passed, the stiffness began to leave my muscles. I came to know something of the joy of muscle-hunger, jumping to the end of a brace, with a veritable yearning to "eat it up."

That reprehensible greenish looking mess from the galley developed an appetizing flavor, and every meal brought the lament: "There isn't enough." I found myself crying out for

food, as the fires under a driving engine cry out for fuel.

Coffee, sweetened with molasses drunk in the lee of the afterhouse at five in the morning, began to taste like the very nectar of the gods.

I had always been pale-faced and delicate, bearing an anæmic look, thanks to the sheltered-life theory of my dear mother. Now, soaked to the skin continually, often sleeping within sopping clothes, I came to believe, as Hell Fire expressed it:

"Sea water makes ye hard, me son."

In a word, I was becoming a splendid animal. I was learning how to sleep, how to eat, how to live in the carcass, and last, but not least, I was learning how to fight.

In the eyes of the sailors, Hell Fire MacDonald's greatest asset was that, "he was no slouch with the mittens." Here was something in which Tug Wilson shone, boxing being more to his fancy than navigation.

Somehow, gradually, and in spite of arduous exactions, I was beginning to love that grim, hard nurse—the Sea.

From being the last, I was coming to be the

first to answer when the watch was called, the first to jump to a halyard grind, the first to lead the way in headlong racing for the highest yards.

To see me lay out at the point of honor, to pass a weather reef erring, caused satisfaction everywhere, except with Mr. Duggan.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ELUSIVE SKIPPER

ON the first night, in the crisis with the packet rats, Captain Peabody had made a dramatic appearance. On the following morning, he laid down the law to the mutineers, and strange to relate, there had been neither sight nor sound of him.

Mutterings and rumors, and yet no slightest clew of the master; he had vanished as completely as though the sea had swallowed him.

Meanwhile, the *Flying Spray,* serene and lofty, held her way, indifferent as the hand of fate.

We shaped a course well to the eastward, fetching almost to the Azores. Then, hauling the wind aft, squared away for an easy run through the Northeast Trades.

One morning, booming along in glorious trade wind weather, it was my trick at the wheel

for the first two hours of the watch. Steering came naturally to me. After my first few hours at the wheel, even the bullying Duggan could conjure up no fault.

I had relieved the wheel before the dawn, and had taken a star at the mizzen yardarm, by which to hold her to her course.

Steering a clipper by a guiding star in the lilt of the trades is compensation for much of the sea's exaction. I was oblivious to all else, when just as the stars were fading, glancing at my compass card, I was conscious of some one conning the ship, behind me.

I turned momentarily, when the calm voice of Captain Peabody sounded:

"Keep your eyes on your steering."

Mr. Duggan, the moment before, had been roaring like the Bull of Bashan, but at the appearance of the master, an unaccustomed moderation took hold of the bucko.

As the dawn came on, Captain Peabody stood for a long time lost in contemplation of the tall leaning spires of canvas. He was studying the trim of the sails.

Mr. MacDonald had her under royals, but

this did not satisfy, and soon skysails and staysails were being shaken out.

Crew and clipper alike seemed to respond in some psychic manner to the new presence on the poop. Bluster and loud-mouthed ranting strangely disappeared. Everything was calm as a New England Sabbath, and yet there was terrific potency behind that calm.

Throughout the rest of my trick at the wheel, the Captain kept up his ceaseless promenade upon the weather side.

In spite of absorption at the wheel, as the light increased, I caught furtive glimpses of the Skipper's face, grim and inscrutable, a face to set one wondering as to the secrets that were locked up behind.

Hell Fire MacDonald, and all the rest of our ship's company were interesting. One might be able to size them up, but here was some one completely baffling.

Where had he been throughout these days?

Why his appearance at this moment?

What was occupying him so intently?

These were a few of the questions that harassed me. As the Captain moved up and down

he seemed to grow entirely oblivious to all else. A rapt look came into his face, and in flashing glimpses I saw his lips moving as though in prayer.

Then something happened that caused me to doubt the prayer idea. One-thumbed Jerry, coming up to relieve the wheel, slouched up the weather side, the side sacred to the master.

The rapt look suddenly gave way to a hard, almost brutal expression. Nothing daunted, the packet rat came slouching along with bold effrontery.

"What are you doing coming up on this side?"

"Your side's good enough fer me."

"Really!"

What happened next was almost too quick to follow. One-thumbed Jerry was treated to a come-hither, and then with a perfect cart-wheel swing he clawed the vacant air, and landed with a thud on the lower deck.

Down there, in an abject heap, he showed an inclination to remain quiescent, when Hell Fire MacDonald arrived with the toe of his boot, at

which he lost no time in coming up on the proper side, and relieving me.

Steering a ship is a wonderful test for the shams that go down to the sea. As I started forward, I heard Captain Peabody admonishing:

"Keep her up!"

"Don't snatch her so!"

"Can't you keep her up to that?"

"Yes, on that. It won't bite you."

"You've run her right across, don't you understand anything?"

"There, she's off again!"

Finally, in disgust, the Captain ordered him away from the wheel, and I was summoned back to take his place.

The packet rat left the quarter with an insolent leer, which seemed to pass unnoticed. He was proceeding toward the fo'c'sle, expecting to gain a watch in his bunk, through inefficiency, when the quiet voice of the Captain pronounced his sentence, and under Hell Fire MacDonald, he agonized for the rest of the day, aloft with sandstone and canvas, polishing the yards, about the most exacting job imaginable on an empty stomach in the blazing sun.

At supper time, after One-thumbed Jerry had spent twelve hours on his cruel perch, Mr. Duggan came to intercede in his behalf.

I was coiling down the mizzen braces, at the time and overheard the third mate exclaim:

"Beggin' yer pardon, Captain, but I was just wonderin' if ye'd forgotten about that poor beggar what's been aloft on the main, since sunrise this mornin'?"

"What of it?"

"Well, Sir, it's a long time since he's had any food."

"How dare you start advising me!"

"I only meant——" Duggan started to wheedle.

"Never mind what you meant. There's one Captain aboard this clipper, one only. If you don't know your place, I'll soon show you. Go to your room, and remain under arrest until further orders."

"But, Sir——"

"Not one more word, go to your room."

With the attitude of a whipped cur, Duggan slunk off the quarter-deck and disappeared. Shortly after, I had to go below.

When I came out again, at the beginning of the night watch, One-thumbed Jerry had at last been relieved from his grueling punishment aloft. The wretch could hardly drag one leg after another when he came down. But there was no respite for him, and he had to stand his watch with the rest.

Never had I seen such a villainous expression as that with which the chastised packet rat glared up at the figure of the Captain, pacing up and down on the poop.

Standing close beside One-thumbed Jerry, I noticed that his knife, against regulations, had been freshly pointed. It required no stretch of the imagination to fancy the reason for that point.

Before the Captain's appearance, it had been the custom of the mate to shorten canvas and snug down for the night. The old man would hear of no such thing. He was the kind that kept his vessel driving night and day. If anything, he carried on more desperately under darkness.

During the night, whenever I came on deck, the Captain was always there, maintaining a

sleepless vigil, pacing up and down, restless and alert, losing no slightest chance to drive his command to the utmost.

On the following morning, Duggan had been released from his arrest, and strangely and suddenly the Captain had again vanished.

CHAPTER XIX

THE SECRET

"WHERE was the Captain?"

"What could have become of him?"

"Was it grog, or was it foul play?"

These, and a thousand other questions occupied us in dog watches, while the *Flying Spray* accomplished her southing, with a dominant figure missing from her poop.

After having made himself felt so potently, the Captain's absence was more than ever a mystery. But, no matter what untoward circumstance might arise, nothing was suffered to hold the clipper from her course. Twenty-five days after leaving Sandy Hook, we were on the Equator. Then, after the usual rollings in the Doldrums, we picked up the Southeast Trades and set a fast pace for the Horn.

And still no Captain!

One afternoon, when we had almost come to

regard the Old Man as missing, Duggan came to me, in a conciliatory manner, observing:

"The Skipper wants to see you, aft in the cabin."

The message itself was surprising, but the tone of the third mate was even more surprising. This was the first civil word that Duggan had addressed to me since the night when he unexpectedly kicked me into the midship house.

Straightening out my clothes, as presentably as possible, I came aft and reported to Billy Oliver, the negro steward, the one individual who held the Captain's secret.

Knowing that my father was the owner of the *Flying Spray,* this gray-haired darkey gave me a certain deference. He spoke with scant trace of negro accent.

"Howdo, Master Curtis. Me an' the Cappen was hearin' about you from Mistah MacDonald. We heard fine things, and so the Cappen wants to see you."

"I'll be glad to see him," I answered.

Here the negro's voice took on a warning note. "But I'll tell ye, Master Curtis, ye don't

want to talk much. Go softly, and don't excite him."

"Why's that?"

Billy looked around and, after chasing out the mess boy and shutting the cabin door, he said with an air of great secretiveness:

"The trouble is, Master Curtis, the Cappen's got an attack of what they calls angina pectoris."

"I never heard of that."

"Well, it's bad; trouble with the heart. He had it just after we sailed, was better for a day, then got another attack, that's kept him in his bunk ever since."

"But why don't you want anyone to know about it?"

Here the darkey's eyes suddenly grew big with apprehension.

"Ah, the trouble is, Master Curtis, we got a terrible crew shipped afore the mast, for this voyage. Them Bloody Forties is the worst crowd o' jailbirds that was ever herded into a fo'c'sle.

"Me an' Cappen Peabody is about the only persons in the world they're scared of. We've had some of 'em under us on a Western Ocean

Packet. We can keep 'em where they belong. But, if they ever knowed that me an' the Cappen wasn't aft here, it 'ud be God help the ship!"

I could not help feeling amused at the way in which Billy Oliver said "Me an' Cappen," but I was later to learn that this old darkey was far more than a common steward.

While we were still conversing in whispers, I heard a voice from an inner stateroom:

"All right, William."

Sick or well, there was no mistaking that note of command, and without further delay, I was ushered into the Captain's presence.

He was lying propped up with pillows; except for an occasional spasm, there was no evidence of weakness, his voice was firm and strong, his eye as keen as ever. An open Bible and a pair of loaded pistols lay together on the stand beside him.

But for the word from the steward, I should not have suspicioned that he was sick at all.

"Be seated, my lad. The steward, who is my doctor, won't let me talk long. But I had one or two things weighing on my mind, that I felt

I ought to tell you. Do you think that you can hold your own counsel?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Well, sometimes I'm afraid that I may not live to see the end of this voyage. In case that anything happens to me, you belong to the afterguard. Because I fear trouble, I've singled you out in advance.

"We've got aboard here a crew of blue and white streaked crooks, who ought to be breaking rock for life. There is only one way that this gang will be held in subjection, and that is by moral force.

"If it ever comes to a clash, don't forget what I have told you. One man, with the might inside, is worth a whole shipload of blustering bullies. You'll hear a lot of talk about the bucko type, 'giving 'em hell,' and all that sort of thing. But, with all respect to the bucko gents, they are not the type that make good masters. With all their roar and bluster, they are never more than second fiddles.

"The clipper captains of New England are supreme not as bulldozers, but as gentlemen.

"Experience alone will never make a com-

mander of men. I tell you the toughest crews would sooner follow an eighteen-year-old schoolboy, like yourself, than a forty-year-old shellback who, in spite of experience, possesses no moral excellence.

"Quality counts, even in the roughest places. They can leave the Jack's-as-good-as-his-master stuff on dry land. There's no room for this equalitarian nonsense outside the three-mile limit. At sea, one man is captain, one man only.

"You may inquire why I seem to have been preaching to you. Well, some day you'll be on the quarter-deck. The mate is teaching you navigation and ship handling, but all that fails if one cannot handle men.

"Never ask to have something done that you wouldn't dare attempt yourself.

"Be sparing in orders. But once you have given an order, die in your tracks rather than see it disobeyed.

"And, finally, remember, the art of command starts with the man who commands himself."

CHAPTER XX

THE PAMPERO

BELOW the line, we found the Trades, in latitudes of tranquil sheer delight, of blue sky, of blue sea, of fleecy clouds, of fair winds blowing.

As we surged steadily southward, it was a joy to stand to the wheel, barefoot, in singlet and dungarees, watching the flying fish in a sea of summer sunshine. These were the days of golden haze, of far horizons.

In halcyon latitudes, air castles and visions of Californian gold came back with old allure. One could not help dreaming, in the kiss of the Trades, below the line.

At nightfall, when Tug and I came together for dog-watch yarning, we set ourselves once more to painting wondrous pictures, once more we were the Argonauts.

With the Trades holding steady and strong, whole watches would pass without a tack or

sheet being lifted, while, best of all, there was the continual sense of passage, of leagues and leagues of sea, forever trampled down astern.

One morning, we passed South Trinidad, an island far off the Brazilian coast, the first land since Sandy Hook sank down astern. We passed close by this romantic spot in the South Atlantic, and I found myself gazing open mouthed at its cloudy mountains, at its thunderous fringe of surf.

Imperceptibly the weather changed. Working southward, mild bland days began to pass. Sleeping under the stars was ended, and we were glad to seek again the shelter of our bunks. At night, the decks took on a chilly feeling. Barefoot days were over.

Off Trinidad, summer was passing to autumn, while the albatross came as the harbinger of wintry nights and stormy seas. Soon I was glad to take my trick at the wheel in a watch coat, buttoned tight.

Preparations for the battle of the Horn now became ominous. All braces were taken from the main deck pinrails, and geared up so as to be worked from the tops of the houses.

He Was Cut Short by a Gorilla Backhander from the Giant Mate

[See page 205]

Said the mate: "There's days when it won't be liveable down there in the waist, because of bursting seas. We're coming up against the worst there is in all the oceans. God help the hooker that leaves anything to chance around Cape Stiff."

Chips was busy preparing weather boards for ports and skylights, all hatches were rebattened, all the gear was overhauled for chafings or weak strands, and life lines were run web-like over the main deck. These lines were stretched between the rigging, about seven feet from the deck, and so closely together that whenever a big sea came aboard, a man might have a line to jump for.

Unlike a human being, a ship wears her old clothes for fine days, and puts on her best for foul weather. In preparation for this foul weather zone, the old sails were taken off and new "number naught" storm canvas was bent in its place.

Mr. MacDonald was busy ceaselessly, searching for every possible weak spot; nothing was left to chance. In the preparation for the battle, all hands were driven ceaselessly.

As the Trades petered out, we came into the region of squalls and calms, where often head winds forced us to tack and tack.

Sometimes we shifted tacks twelve times in a day, a maneuver not appreciated by the crew, but in spite of the ceaseless labor, I hailed the opportunity to perfect myself in sail handling. With both watches in keenest competition, at the cry of "Mainsail haul!" it was as good as an Andover-Exeter game.

The estuary of the River Plate can produce its fair share of wild and boisterous weather, fit introducer to the Horn. In this section, we ran into a "pampero," a hot violent wind blowing directly from the pampas of South America, hence its name. These famous storms are not of long duration, but they are of terrific intensity, and swoop down upon the unsuspecting like a bolt out of a clear sky.

The one which caught us, unprepared, was thoroughly typical. It was about six bells in the second dog watch. Mr. MacDonald was holding forth to me on sailing great circle courses, when a sable cloud, black as night, sud-

denly raced up out of the northwest, coming at us with tremendous speed.

The wind began to whistle through the shrouds, while up to windward a mass of broken water appeared, like a foaming mountain against an ink black sky.

One glance at that sea and sky was enough.

"My God, here's the whole River Plate coming down on us!" yelled the mate.

"Let go your t'gallant halyards," he shouted.

The words were not out of his mouth before the pampero was upon us. It seemed as though the whole world were crashing and smashing to atoms.

I made a rush to let fly the t'gallant halyard, and as the yard came down with a run, the sail, tugging wildly, was split into ribbons, and whirled away, like so much gossamer.

Almost instantaneously, the fore royal broke adrift, with a noise of heavy gunfire. This was followed by another and louder roar in the bows, and a rattle of hanks, as the lookout shouted:

"Inner jib's gone, Sir!"

Things were certainly beginning to look desperate, with sails tearing themselves out of the

bolt ropes in every direction. It seemed to me as though everything aloft had started to blow adrift.

"Call all hands!" was the next frantic order of the mate. I had never before heard such a terrified note in the bucko's voice.

Then, turning to me, he said:

"Rouse out Sails and Chips!" These two were called only in emergency, and I lost no time in summoning them.

Up on the foc's'le I could hear the bos'n sounding his whistle, followed by the long-drawn cry:

"A-l-l hands on deck to shorten s-a-i-l!"

"All hands on deck" is the ordinary call. But the appendage "to shorten sail" permitted no leisurely dressing. This last was quite as insistent as an alarm of fire.

Men catapulted out from below in bare feet, in shirt tails, some well-nigh naked; it was a case of the ship or their lives, and they knew it.

As I dashed aft from the midship house, I noticed that Captain Peabody was again upon the poop, standing there calm and masterful against the weather rail.

At his direction, the starboard watch were drawing up the mainsail. While the mate eased the sheet, Duggan clawed his way over to the tack.

With the clipper shipping tons of solid water, this job of taking in the mainsail was ticklish in the extreme for the shivering half-drowned wretches, waist deep in surging brine.

All hands were hauling away for dear life at the spilling lines. The wet and sodden canvas banged and bellowed uproariously, while the tops of the seas came over the weather bulwarks like clouds of driven snow.

We were heedless of all else except mastering that sail, before it was too late, when a sharp warning rang out:

"Look out there, men. Hang on for your lives!"

The Captain's warning came too late. In an instant a boarding sea had swooped us off our feet, causing us to lose all control of the mainsail which was flapping like the furies.

With the harnessed mainsail suddenly escaped, there came a deafening roar, as it split from erring to erring, and swooped away.

How we ever came out of that seething waist I do not know. Twice, I was almost overboard, and finally, senseless from a crack on the head, I was lifted out of the welter and hauled up to the poop.

The clipper, on her beam ends, with yards almost in the water, seemed to have been stricken her death blow.

I thought that she would never rise. Somewhere, Mr. MacDonald was bellowing loud orders, while Duggan vied with him in frantic noise. But the Captain uttered never a word. Orders in this extremity were a mere futility. The situation provided one of two alternatives, either the *Flying Spray* would founder, or she would come back upon an even keel.

In the meantime, she lay dead, like a stricken queen, with her lofty yards almost plunging into the sea.

And then, against expectation, she started to come up, while the voice of Captain Peabody at last sounded:

"Easy there, easy! Now, then, bring her up to the wind."

CHAPTER XXI

STRAITS OF LE MAIRE

IN cloudy blustery weather, we crossed the fiftieth parallel of south latitude, beginning the passage of the Horn, from fifty south in the Atlantic to fifty south in the Pacific.

The everlasting west winds, blowing forever around the world in the high latitudes, make this a heartbreaking passage for mariners bound from the eastward.

The experience of the pampero had given us a foretaste of rough weather. But Mr. MacDonald sneered when I spoke of its terror.

"That was only a kiss, me lad. Just wait till old Cape Stiff starts puttin' her arms around ye, and then ye'll see the real, first-class, copper-bottomed, howling snorters!"

He told me of ships that were for weeks fighting against the great West Wind Drift, losing everything that they had gained, finding themselves, after a month or more of battle, not

one inch further to the westward than where they started.

There were cases of captains that had gone crazy, or died broken-hearted in the midst of this awful testing.

In a former passage, after six weeks of vain effort, the mate was once forced to turn tail and run right around the world, in order to steal a march on that grim warder of the south.

The seas had turned from the blue of the tropics, to gray and black. Snow squalls were continually swooping down upon us, everything was cold, grim, foreboding. Out of the ragged sky, came the albatross, answering with his weird screeching to the penguin's cry.

Captain Peabody had rounded Cape Stiff from the eastward a dozen times, but this was a combat at which the most experienced were baffled.

Early one morning, there came a burst of sickly sunshine from cloud and storm. In that brief peep, the Skipper made an observation, announcing a few moments later:

"We're off Staten Island. Mister, send a lookout onto the main skysail yard."

As I was standing handy, the mate said:

"All right, Curtis, up ye go."

By this time, I was able to race to the spidery heights with the nonchalance of a true sailor. With a rush for the shrouds I started upward. Attaining the skysail mast, I shinnied up, and swung myself astride the yard, as much at home as though I stood upon the quarter.

From this eerie perch, I descried a faint blue haze on the horizon, that finally became a solid streak.

There was no mistaking this as the dim outline of land, stretching south and westward.

"Land, ho!" I hailed the deck.

"Where away?"

"Three points on the lee bow, Sir."

"All right, lay down with you."

At the order, I started at once to descend.

We raised the land rapidly, and by noon, with a following breeze the bold shores of Staten Island were towering just ahead.

During the morning, another clipper peeked over the horizon, and with a course converging on our own, came on at racing speed.

With his spyglass Captain Peabody seemed

to be divided in interest between a scrutiny of the land and an equally keen scrutiny of the approaching clipper.

As she came on with piled up canvas, he handed his glass to Mr. MacDonald.

"What do you make her out to be, Mister?"

After a moment's searching through the glass, the mate replied:

"That's the *Meteor,* Sir. Ain't no mistakin' her, comin' on like a rampin' race horse."

With the word that our rival, whom we had not spoken since sailing, was closing in upon us, all hands were at once upon their toes.

For the first time in many a day, Dannie Parrott, our chantey man, led off with "Whiskey Johnnie," all hands joining in with a will, as we swigged away at the braces, tautening every stitch of canvas with well-stretched sheets and halyards.

The *Flying Spray* was carrying what our Skipper considered a heavy press of sail, whole topsails, courses, and outer jib. But the *Meteor,* coming up on the opposite tack, with the wind a dead muzzler, was actually carrying three t'gallant sails and flying jib.

Captain Peabody looked at the approaching cloud of canvas with amazement. Indeed, such cracking on would not have been possible, but the *Meteor* had the run of the sea, abaft the beam, while we had it before the beam.

Lifting her long sharp bows to the wild surging seas she was indeed a worthy contender for a glorious rivalry in trade.

As the two clippers converged, they began signaling to one another, which nearly led to disaster aboard the *Meteor*. Her steersman, watching the signals, allowed his ship to come up to the wind, and got caught aback. In a flash she had heeled over so far as to be within an ace of dismasting.

So close were we at this time, that our crew on the *Flying Spray* could follow everything. We saw Captain Downey of the *Meteor* knock the careless steersman senseless, and snatch the wheel. We saw the watch below come flying on deck in their shirt tails. They were smart as paint in whipping the sail off her, and as soon as she was relieved, the *Meteor* brought her spars to windward and stood up.

"A close shave!" muttered Peabody.

Soon, this exciting episode was blotted out by our own headlong pace.

The two racing clippers were in company for a day, and a night, having it out tack and tack, sometimes one and sometimes the other gaining the advantage.

On the following morning, with our rival still in sight, the mate exclaimed:

"You can leave it to the Old Man to give 'em the slip."

"How'll he do it?"

"Dunno, but he'll do it. Captain Peabody's as full o' racin' tricks, as a dog is full o' fleas."

Among the rival Yankee skippers there were many ways of achieving success. Some invariably made good tracks, others prided themselves on their daring navigation, in cutting corners, and in dashing through narrow channels. Captain Peabody was of this latter class.

In an ocean race, he hated to have a rival in sight, preferring to keep such hull down over the horizon.

Determined to shake the *Meteor,* and taking into consideration the set of the wind and tide, the Skipper decided to run through the Straits

of Le Maire, a desperate chance for one bound to the westward. Countless fine ships had left their ribs along this ocean graveyard. But the *Flying Spray* was racing for the fame of Yankee Clippers, and fast passages came only to those who dared.

CHAPTER XXII

"WHERE ANGELS FEAR TO TREAD"

AS the *Flying Spray* closed in toward the land, the *Meteor* held her course for the outside passage, gradually fading into gray haze.

By noon, we were off the entrance to the Straits, with everything drawing. Our clipper, on her best point of sailing, was doing some famous traveling.

Dashing past the rugged headlands of Tierra del Fuego, we could see plainly the opposite shore of Staten Island.

Everything promised auspiciously, at the start. The Old Man was in fine fettle, walking up and down, snapping his fingers at his phenomenal luck. But, like many another, he had counted on this tricky passage a little too soon. Gradually, his exultant look gave way, as the wind, always variable here, backed, and began to head us.

Halfway through the Straits, with the wind unexpectedly drawing ahead, that which was most dreaded had occurred.

We had unwittingly come into a box where consummate sailing alone could save us. Mr. MacDonald looked worried, while the Skipper calmly directed the t'gallants to be shaken out.

The naked spars of a shipwrecked clipper, piled up high, told of a hungry maw that in like manner was gaping to swallow us up. The prospect was bitter indeed. Go back we could not. At all costs, it was a case of winning through or leaving our bones on an iron lee shore.

Fearing that his vessel would miss stays, except under most skillful handling, the Skipper himself took the wheel.

As we came around on the starboard tack, the Skipper called:

"We'll have to get more canvas on her. Set the mainstay sail and flying jib."

With the additional sail there was an added jump, and soon we were on the opposite shore. Running well in under the high rocks where the swell was easier, she came around in fine

style, the Captain speaking to her all the time, as coaxingly as one might address a thoroughbred.

There was no doubt about her sympathy between master and ship, no doubt that she would do her best in response to the hand upon her wheel.

Coming about, in quick succession, we made a series of short tacks, where the recent training at the end of the Trades told to perfection. For once, our packet rats had their best foot forward; every time the yards came round with man-of-war precision. Captain, ship, and crew were all alike tuned for finest effort.

With a jutting-out cape half a point on the weather bow, Mr. MacDonald advised setting the royals, but the Skipper answered:

"Not yet. Might get dismasted. Snow squalls are coming ahead. We'll save the royals for the last extremity."

Never had I seen the *Flying Spray* sailed so hard. She heeled over at times until one feared that the very sticks would be cracked out of her. Waiting for something to go, our fingers itched to ease the sheets, but still we

carried on, for chancing was the only hope.

At two o'clock in the afternoon, we tacked right under the headland. It looked as though we could have cleared it, if we had kept going. But the Captain was wiser, and stood out to escape the backwash.

Once more we tacked under the Staten Island shore. This time the clipper came about as if she knew what her commander was expecting of her.

"Now, then, old girl, here's where you're going to do it."

Standing back for the last headland, I saw with relief that the wind had hauled a little to our advantage.

"That's better," said the Captain. "We should clear the cape by a quarter of a mile. But for fear of leeway, now's the time for the last card. Have the royals ready for setting."

At the way in which we were straining already, Mr. MacDonald could not help expostulating:

"D'ye think she'll stand it, Sir?"

"Dunno, Mister. But if we're goin', we might as well die crackin' on, as runnin' off."

The mate at once summoned me and Tug.

"I want you two lads to cast off the gaskets from the royals. Curtis, you go up on the main, Wilson on the fore. Remember, ye're takin' yer lives in yer hands when ye go, but it's our only chance; are you willing to risk it?"

As both of us signified our willingness, he proceeded:

"Get the bunt gasket in such shape that you can let go in an instant, at the first signal, which I'll give you by a blast on the foghorn. The minute you hear that horn, let go the gaskets, and then git down as fast as God'lmight'll let ye. Are ye ready?"

"Aye, aye, Sir."

"All right then, go ahead."

At the word Tug and I started aloft on our wild race with death. In the sudden squalls, I was glued against the ratlins, while the strap of my sou'wester nigh choked me from the fury of the wind.

All sense of fear seemed to have gone, there was only a desperate idea of selling one's life at the highest price.

Tug beat me in the race aloft, and then, just

as we started to cast loose the gaskets, a snow squall whirled down upon us, blotting out everything in a cloud of whiteness. At the same instant, dimly from below I heard the note of the foghorn. In a sudden panic, I could not succeed in casting all the gaskets clear. Seizing my knife, I made a series of frantic rips, setting the canvas flapping, and without a second's delay swung onto the top-gallant yard, shooting down from there on the backstay.

When we arrived on deck the royals were already mastheaded, and sheeted home. I never saw such sailing before or since, as the *Flying Spray* treated us to at that moment. Mantled in spray, with cascading seas sweeping her continually, she was indeed worthy of her name.

Such incredible driving seemed more than yards and spars would warrant, but still the clipper carried on. Realizing the weakness of the Captain's heart, I felt more apprehension for him, at the moment, than for anything else.

Ever since the crisis, he had been standing to the wheel, bareheaded, without even a top-coat to shield him from the biting cold. I

could see plainly that he was oblivious to his own sensations.

With the royals set, there was nothing more that we could do, and all hands sought out places of protection.

Gazing from under the lee of the aftercompanion, I saw ahead of us, looming out of the driving scud, a towering black rock, scarred and jagged, rising sheer from a fringe of thunderous surf.

Our task was to weather that ugly bight, with the tide setting us directly onto it. Our only hope was speed, to drive through, over, or under, but at all costs to drive sheer past.

The *Flying Spray* fairly leaped and quivered as she ate into the wind, while in the rolls the seas came boiling clean across her hatches.

"Another minute," muttered the mate, "and we'll be clear, or we'll be done for."

There was one chance in a hundred that we would claw off. The back 'scend of the seas was already falling upon our decks in tons. We had come into a chaos of lashing, boiling foam, a cauldron of the furies, where everything suddenly was blotted out by the smoking seas.

I had a strange feeling that our clipper was being dragged to her doom. It was as though the mantle of spray were the death cap, let down to blot out her last agony.

We could feel on our faces the whirl of the wind as it eddied from the face of the granite wall. In that moment, there stood between us and eternity naught but a piled up cloud of canvas, holding the wind like sheets of iron. If anything gave, at that crisis, the *Flying Spray* would have added her name to those "posted missing."

But against all expectation, her superlative workmanship stood the strain, and without parting a rope yarn, she drove through foam and thunder to the open sea.

Before I could realize what had happened, the Captain was handing over the wheel, calling out the new course, as quietly as though he had just come up from dinner.

CHAPTER XXIII

WEST WIND DRIFT

AFTER beating through the Straits of Le Maire, it looked as though daring were to be rewarded by a record passage. Once before with almost unheard-of luck, Captain Peabody had stolen past that grim Southern Gateman, but at this season the Horn was not to be found napping.

For five weeks, under short canvas, we battered our way into the teeth of the great West Wind Drift.

It was the month of August, screeching, howling, roaring Cape Horn winter. Ice and snow and sleet and hail were our continual portion.

After five weeks of agonizing battle, there we were off Staten Island again, right back where we had started, our leap with death in the Straits, and all the battles since had been put to naught by a succession of gales from the westward, which extracted their utmost toll.

Things were getting serious. We were growing weak from sheer exhaustion, while our gallant clipper labored heavily. Ships and men cannot endure great gales forever. There is a limit to flesh and blood, a limit to spars and canvas.

The galley had been gutted by boarding seas, and we were without hot food for days, our clothes were continually soaked, no "soul and body lashings" sufficed to keep out that icy water. Our blankets were mildewed and rancid, the place in which we slept was continually swept with rushing water.

Andover Academy and the care-free days of school seemed ages removed from this iron battling. The last vestige of youth had been kissed good-by. No matter what our years, there, south of fifty-five, all alike were men, standing up to manhood's grimmest testing.

In winter weather off Cape Stiff, one sees beyond a doubt what kind of stuff is in his fellows. In this testing, the packet rats were superb, a most delightful surprise to Captain Peabody. To see these brawny fellows racing aloft in a

screeching snowstorm was to forget their vices in admiration for their courage.

Day by day, we battled our way unendingly against the Westerlies. In twenty-four hours we would make perhaps forty miles to windward in the teeth of a dead muzzler, only to lose again every time we wore ship, because we had to run too far to the south or north.

Captain Peabody, amid the Cape Horn graybeards, appeared at his best. The storm fiend ushered him into his kingdom.

Others might growl against terrific odds, or wail at heart-breaking reverses, but the Skipper's patience was invincible. I always breathed more freely when he was on the poop, as the clipper seemed to behave better beneath his watchful eye.

Grim and gray of face, communing with none but himself, he would stand for hours handling his clipper amid mountainous seas, handling her always with consummate skill.

My first impressions of the sea had fostered in me an admiration of brute strength. Here,

in the testing of the Horn, I came to realize that brute strength was nothing compared to strength of spirit.

Pale, wan, slight of frame, with a heart that fluttered weakly, there was our indomitable Skipper, facing the storm fiend in the eye, and beating him at his own game.

He filled for me the picture of what a captain should be. The fame of the Yankee clipper, above all else, rested upon such as Calvin Peabody, whose triumph was that of spirit over matter.

To see him, engaged in that unending conflict with the great West Wind Drift, always reminded me of that exhortation:

"Fight the good fight of faith."

There were times in the lapses of the gale, when the old autocrat would unbend sufficiently to give me some of his ideas on the Cape Horn gospel.

"Carry your canvas as long as you can."

"Snatch every lull and slant to drive her, when you're up against the Westerlies."

"When there's nothing but the fo'cas'le head showing, it's time to heave her to."

"Haymakers to the wheel south of fifty-five spell ships for Davy Jones."

"Running with a Cape Horn sea behind, better lay her to too early, than too late."

"When you're commanding a ship in these latitudes, trust none but yourself. Carry on to the limit, and remember, the passage of the Horn belongs only to the bold."

Sometimes, in these snatching lectures of the storm, I was startled to see how weak and wan the Captain looked. Remembering his secret, I felt a strange misgiving.

What if sometime in the midst of one of these assaults his fluttering heart should fail?

What if another should come to his command?

It made one shudder to think of a crisis without this consummate master on the poop. I tried to drive the thought away, but in night watches a haunting fear returned.

CHAPTER XXIV

YELLOW STREAK

IN headlong plunging between the graybeards, the inner jib broke adrift, and went slatting like thunder into the wind. The sudden loss of headsail brought the wheel out of control, and a heavy sea broke over the port bow burying everything in swirling green.

As the clipper finally righted herself, there came the voice of the mate:

"Lively, two o' ye and secure that jib."

Here was a nasty job, that had taken more than its toll of human lives, as the jib was the most dangerous of all sails to secure.

Rip Kelley and I rushed out to obey the order. As I laid out on the bowsprit, I felt in my bones that tragedy was impending.

Perhaps it was the same feeling that caused the mate to caution us:

"Watch yerselves!"

Plunging again and again into the seas, some-

times almost buried on our precarious perch, we struggled to subdue that mankiller of a sail.

We had just secured the slatting demon, when one of the uprising graybeards suddenly unshipped Kelley from the footropes, and left him hanging with one hand from the jackstay.

"Christ, hold me!"

I bent to give a hand, but just at that moment, our bows went shooting skyward; as we plunged again into the trough everything was completely submerged. When we rose, Kelley was missing.

Instantly, I clambered back across the knightheads, shouting:

"Man overboard!"

For a moment, he appeared on the crest of the wave, struggling feebly, calling out with a hopeless, mournful cry.

In answer to that cry, Tug Wilson rushed to the stern, where he paused to shake off boots and oilskins, and then, with a flying leap, he was over the side, fighting his way to the drowning man with mighty strokes.

Everywhere there was confusion, the mate

calling out to clear a boat away, while Duggan remonstrated:

"No use, no boat can get 'em now."

Then, out of the jargon of counter orders, there came the voice of Captain Peabody:

"Weather main brace there,—lay the yard back."

The yard was swung round, as if by magic. Thrusting Duggan aside, the Captain himself unlashed to lee boat. At once several joined him, hooked on the tackles and shoved her out.

With the boat swinging wildly on the tackles, the Skipper held up his hand in warning:

"Volunteers only! If a man goes out, he may not come back!"

Unmindful of this warning, four men at once jumped into the boat, and took their places.

"Some one for the tiller," was the next call.

All hands looked expectantly toward Duggan; it was the third mate's place of honor.

The second mate had gone aloft to keep the drowning pair in sight, and as the third still hesitated, Mr. MacDonald started forward. But the Captain intervened.

"No, Mr. MacDonald, you'll have to stand

by to handle the yards. Are you going to take charge of this boat, Mr. Duggan?"

Duggan's brutal face, in that moment, seemed to sag. With the unmistakable whine of a cur, he answered:

"It's no good throwing lives away for nothing. No boat can live in such a sea."

While this hulking coward hesitated, every instant of delay lessened the chances of my brave chum battling out there for his very life.

Smashing Duggan out of my way, I jumped into his place at the stern sheets, clasped the tiller ropes, and yelled:

"All right, lower away."

There was a whir of block sheaves, a rush, a splash, and we tossed on void immensity.

"Bow off there," I cautioned.

"Now, then, give it to her, lads."

As we shoved off, a giant wave sent us soaring, and in the next instant we went plunging into a bottomless abyss. As we rose toward a breaking crest, I called:

"Keep her head on."

When we surmounted the next wave, we

heard the voice of Mr. Blandy from the mizzen top, shouting out the direction where the two drowning men were battling for life.

"All right, drive her, lads! Drive her!" I shouted, standing up in the stern sheets, with the yoke ropes in my hands.

No college coxswain ever urged a boat crew more than I did my trusty mates across those Cape Horn rollers. And no finer boatmen ever responded to a coxswain's call.

Climbing the long steep slopes was back-breaking indeed. But the steady clack—clack—clack—of the rowlocks, and the rhythmic swing of the rowers never for an instant wavered.

One's nerves were tensed almost to desperation. In that clack of oars alone, was soothing.

Astern, the clipper, with her main yard backed, rolled heavily. Leaving her, it seemed as though we had plunged into another world, a world of yawning gulfs, of tumbling mountains, of gray sea, and grayer sky.

Again and again, I rose at the tiller and listened for a hail. No sound, but the everlasting chorus of the oars. The men at the sweeps were

panting heavily. The awful strain was telling, but the pace was undiminished.

Seeing that Cockey Donovan, a little fellow in the bow, was beginning to weaken, I directed him to pull in his oar and face about.

"Keep your eyes open, ahead there; they may be handy."

"Perhaps we've gone too far."

At this suggestion, we lay to for a moment, sending out whistles, shouts, and catcalls, but no answer.

A gale had been blowing as we left, and now the wind was rising ominously, while to make matters worse, it was growing dark.

"That's more than dark, that's Cape Stiff comin'," muttered some one. At the same moment, a light appeared in the gathering gloom, waving frantically.

"That'll be Mr. Blandy with a lantern in the mizzen top, signaling us to return."

"Aye, she's comin' on fer an old whistler, no mistakin' it."

"Will we turn back?"

"No, not till we find 'em. Break your backs on those oars."

With the rising wind, the exactions were increasing. Every time we rose on a crest, the gale was so strong that it almost blew our bows around.

In the midst of that mad swirl, I heard faintly the sound of some one calling.

" 'Vast rowing."

Standing up again, I sent out a shouting answer, and next time there was no mistaking the voice; it was Tug Wilson.

In another minute, we came up to the drowning men. Just as we reached them, Kelley disappeared, but Tug hauled him up again, an instant later.

Working our boat to windward, we dropped back steadily upon them, and the two wet forms were hove across the gunwale. Tug with marvelous endurance was quite able to take care of himself, but the other fellow was completely spent.

With two men in the bottom of the boat, our gunwale was well down, and we shipped water continuously, so that Tug at once set himself to bailing.

They had lighted a tar barrel aboard the clipper, to guide us back, but a long wicked sea

stretched between. Our hardest task now lay before, bucking into the combined force of wind and tide.

"Don't like the look of that sky, ahead," said Tug, pausing for a moment at his bailing. Then, suddenly, he exclaimed:

"My God!"

Well might he cry. Our guiding light had suddenly been blotted out by a snow squall that was swooping down upon us.

The whirling snow came on apace, and soon, with an ugly snarling lift to the tops of the seas, the squall was upon us, a mass of whistling, blinding whiteness.

A sudden panic came upon the men. They were like frightened sheep, knowing not which way to turn. The frantic handling of the oars plunged us into a broken crest, and we came out half full of water.

"Stow that. Altogether, and steady. If we can't keep her head on we're finished."

Kelley who was lying in the bottom of the boat had partly come to, and in delirium was living over again his frightful experience with the jib.

"Christ, hold me!"

Again and again he let out that piercing cry, just as he had shouted in that terrible moment when he hung with one hand to the jackstay, before the graybacks tore him downward.

As the strength of the squall whirled past, in utter exhaustion, the men at the oars ceased from their frantic exertions, bending over, panting and spent.

Cockey Donovan, utterly unnerved, began to cry, sniveling away, until Tug gave him a resounding kick, admonishing:

"Stow that, ye chicken-livered pup."

"Cheer up, it's clearing. This will soon pass," I called out blithely. And then, as though to mock my words, a thick, impenetrable wall of fog closed down upon us.

Without a compass, without a star, without a light, we were lost on the howling Cape Horn wastes, lost where thick weather sometimes held for days!

CHAPTER XXV

FOG

A MAN could fight against the seas, against the storms, but what could a person do bare-fisted against a Cape Horn fog?

Never before had I felt so pitifully weak, so ineffectual. All about us, everywhere, there had closed in a glistening wall of gloom. My first impression was as though this closing wall were in reality the grave. To struggle against it was vain. To raise a voice and cry was no less vain. With sudden hopeless abandon, I found myself repeating, half aloud:

"What will be, will be."

To this evidence of capitulation on my part, there came back a snarling challenge:

"What d'ye mean with talk like that?"

Whatever happened to the rest of us, it was plain that Tug maintained his self-possession. In violent contrast to him, the others were com-

pletely unmanned, hanging slack and dazed upon the oars, while Rip Kelley was yammering away in the bows.

Thus, drifting aimlessly we swung broadside to, while a crested sea broke inboard on our weather quarter. Rebuked by this, I seized the yoke lines, calling:

"Keep way, there. Keep way."

The men at the oars were still hesitating when a bucket of icy water brought them to their senses, while Tug, with bailing bucket admonished:

"If ye're lookin' fer suicide, I ain't, so break yer backs on them oars."

Along with his cold shower, he managed to administer a couple of rousing kicks, which had the desired effect of setting all hands at the rowing again, whereat I lost no time meeting the threat of a cross sea springing up with a change of wind.

I had often heard seafaring men declare that a fog and a blow never came together. Now I knew such declarations to be false. Everywhere the trailing wraith of the fog, hounded by the rising fury of the gale.

The wind bucking into the set of the current was kicking up a tideway sea of alarming proportions. In the midst of which the bobbing lifeboat kept up a series of hair-curling antics.

"One minute she's waltzin' on her stem, and the next minute she's dancin' on her stern," panted Tug.

The cresting tops blown off, the seas mantled us in flying spray. Continual dallops slopped inboard so that Tug was pressed to keep down the water. Even at his best, the bottom was half full, which, rolling, served to make our craft that much more unmanageable.

The whistling of the wind, the surge of breakers along our side, and the rush of seas to leeward filled the air with threatenings, accentuated by the mystery of the fog. This sense of surrounding mystery was too much for the overwrought nerves of Rip Kelley who was continually shrieking out in alarm, until Tug Wilson caught him by the nape of the neck:

"Here, you, stow that hollerin' and bail fer yer life."

At the steering, I found myself overawed by the unexpected wrath of these Cape Horn seas,

gray-bearded, roaring, white with foam, there was no doubt about their murderous intent.

It had whittled down to a grim battle, a battle for life in which there was no respite, no breathing space, no thought of quarter. We were at it for our lives.

Fortunately, two of our crew were consummate boatmen. At the oars, with unerring instinct, they countered just in time. One minute too early, one minute too late, would have been our undoing.

We had given up all thought of finding our parent vessel, now. Our one thought was to keep afloat. To meet successfully the onrush of those wicked seas.

Above, fog, fog, fog, wherever the eye turned. Beneath, the racing seas, going by like wolves of prey. Gazing at these raping seas again caused the overwrought Kelley to start up intermittently, until his fidgets threatened to capsize all hands.

"Eh, stow that, Kelley, or ye'll have the whole works in the drink," I admonished. But my caution was unavailing.

After another close squeak, Tug snarled:

"Fer heaven's sake, sit down."

The Irishman's answer was to rise again, screaming:

"What's that! What's that!"

Reaching out for the maniac, Tug sent him crashing into a senseless heap in the bows.

"Good," I muttered. "He'd 'ave spilled us, if ye hadn't fixed him."

With the viciousness of the first onslaught, passing over, some one opined:

"This thick stuff'll go with the wind."

But to our chagrin, as the blow unexpectedly abated, dead, cold fog still mantled us, impenetrable as ever.

Always, with an eye for the bright side, Tug sang out cheerily:

"Lucky thing she didn't settle down to a hard gale. We'll beat her, yet."

While Tug was incurably optimistic, I knew too much to share his spirit. But in spite of the hopelessness of our situation, unconsciously I found myself devising a future course. Knowing that we were in a current, setting along Tierra del Fuego toward the Diego Ramirez, I made up my mind that the sheep stations on

that ocean waste would be more welcome than the mainland coast with its man-killing natives.

The idea of being picked up, I put outside of practical consideration.

As the hours dragged on, the fog continued, with a cold that was fiercely penetrating. A certain palpable graying warned us of the coming of dawn, but day was hardly appreciable from night in this unchanging gloom.

The Cape Horn calm continued with its ominous threatening. Half a dozen rolls, a lull, then again the same succession of strange rolling.

Rip Kelley, after long unconsciousness, came to, and added to the common dread by his deranged imaginings.

"There's the loom o' a mains'l."

"I'd swear I caught the outline o' yards an' spars."

"Did ye get that?"

"What?"

"A ship's bell."

With my head throbbing wildly at these suggestions, I, too, began to conjure up strange sights before a fog-blurred vision. As these ap-

pearances began to grow, I realized that self-control was waning. Dreading what was coming over me, I called:

"Ship your oars there, men, and start rowing."

"What for?"

I was at that moment in far greater fear of losing my mind than of losing my life. Of course, I dared not reveal this feeling and so, to put the crew off guard, I answered:

"Got a hunch. May be wrong, but I'm goin' to follow it."

Catching my intent, Tug fell in, exclaiming:

"Ye always was the one for hunches, Laurie. I really believe ye've got the second sight."

Tug's declaration worked an amazing metamorphosis in our crew. After hours of fatigue and exposure, they set themselves to it again with a will. And, strangest of all, I, too, found myself hypnotized into the idea that I was following some predetermined course.

CHAPTER XXVI

FIGHT ON ROYAL YARD

"BANG!" Out of the fog there came the sound of a gun. They were firing on the ship to give us our direction.

No need now to urge the men at the oars. Those who a moment before were done, suddenly started to it with a vengeance.

For fully a quarter of an hour we held our course, then, just as we were beginning to grow dubious, a second boom of the gun.

This time we saw the flash, and the deafening roar seemed to be right over our heads. As the reverberations died away, there came the unmistakable creak of blocks and whine of sheaves.

"I can hear the running gear," said Tug. "We must be right onto her."

"Aye, and did ye get that?"

It was the note of a foghorn on the clipper's bow.

We had come against our parent vessel and yet, so baffling was the fog that every sound seemed false.

Twice I laid a course directly toward the sound of the gun, each time I overshot the mark. With the note of the foghorn growing dimmer, we were plainly going in the wrong direction.

"Back water, men."

With another note of the horn we came about and started to retrace our course. All hands were pulling with furious strokes, when, without the slightest warning we crashed fair into the clipper, just under the lee quarter.

At the force of the impact all hands tumbled pell-mell, while the boat was splintered at the bows.

In a twinkling, we had fastened the boat falls and were swung back again upon the deck. As seven were counted in the returning party a cheer went up from the crew, while Captain Peabody clasped my hand with a fervent:

"Thank God, my lad. Only His mercy could have brought you through."

The Captain's devoutness would have impressed me at any other time. But at that moment there was scant thankfulness. Just in front of me Duggan was pulling down a lantern from the mizzen yard. As he opened the cover to blow it out, I saw the flickering light shining upon him with its yellow gleam.

At sight of that face, a paroxysm of rage took hold of me. All the fighting edge of these mad seas clamored out for satisfaction. There was a yearning for just one smash at that face, marked so plainly with its yellow streak.

But for the restraining presence of the skipper I would have spat straight into Duggan's eyes, showing in the lantern light with maddening complacence.

As it was, I satisfied myself for the time being by muttering as I passed:

"You dirty dog!"

I expected that this challenge would have been accepted then and there. But he pretended not to hear and after singing out a loud order about making the boat fast, he turned upon his heel.

When I came out on deck four hours later, Duggan was making himself scarce. Thanks

I Gathered Some Dry Wood, Just as Robinson Crusoe Had Done on This Same Island

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to Hell Fire MacDonald, I was developing into a fast hand with the gloves, and this doubtless weighed in the bucko's mind.

But no matter how he shunned me during hours of darkness, his bullying attitude was the same as ever by daylight.

Early the following morning we sighted the Diego Ramirez Islands, the "Dagger Rammer E's" as the sailors call them. A cluster of lofty rocks surrounded by milk-white fields of foam.

Passing the Diego Ramirez brought our first slant of easterly wind, and the Captain lost no time in cracking on. After three weeks of shortened canvas, t'gallants and even royals were shaken out, while the *Flying Spray* began to make westing with a vengeance.

Sporting royals in the pitch of the Horn is a ticklish job, and the Old Man kept us on our toes every minute. Not too brave, not too cautious, he gauged his chances to the utmost and ventured always to that limit.

Twice, at the menace of squalls, he had us aloft to furl the royals, then they were put to her again.

All through the afternoon we were hanging onto the lofty kites. But with the coming on of night, a lowering sky and a wicked sea, he ruled for caution.

The crojack and flying jib were taken off and the royals furled.

I assisted on the crojack yard and then went up to stow the mizzen royal. So well had I mastered my lessons that I could have found my way blindfold at this job.

On getting onto the yard, I discovered that the sail had not been properly clewed up and was slatting and thundering away furiously.

The starboard leech lines had jammed, causing a beautiful mix-up. I was hastening to make the best of a bad job, when Duggan, below on the t'gallant yard, began to single me out for bellowing abuse.

This so enraged me that I was more than ever delayed at the leech lines. At which Duggan came up to the royal yard, calling out:

"Have I got to do this job myself, ye worthless poop ornament?"

I was picking up the heaviest part of the sail when he arrived, and as usual started to lay down

the law without himself offering anything but bluster.

"Don't you know how to furl a royal?"

"Where the hell have ye been all these days?"

"Wha'd'ye mean by botching it up like that?"

While he stood there, contributing nothing but hot air, I was fighting tooth and nail with a gale whistling round my ears.

Finally, in spite of Duggan's obstruction, I made the bunt gasket fast and laid out to windward where the royal was thrashing like a thousand devils.

It was all I could do to master the weather clew. At that moment, of all times, Duggan's taunts were unbearable.

Balancing myself, without warning, I suddenly shot out and landed him a stinging blow fair in the eyes.

He evidently expected this and braced himself to receive it. In the next instant, he countered, by smashing my head against the yard. This blow with its stinging pain served to awaken all the latent resentment that was in me. I was at last mixing it up with the bulldozing coward who had been making my life a misery

for months. With a rage that was almost insanity, there was indifference to all else, except my desire to smash that creature off the yard. With this murderous intent I started for him, hammer and tongs.

Twice I landed on his face, bringing blood each time.

He came back strong, but thanks to the terrific pitching of the Cape Horn seas, missed, and from the viciousness of his blow, nearly pitched headlong.

We were one hundred and seventy feet above the deck, where every motion was vastly magnified; truly an audacious fighting ring. But mad rage is no respector of places.

As he came at me a second time, I was doubled up by a solar plexus, which made the footropes swing dangerously. Losing my balance I toppled back over the yard and only saved myself by hanging on with my right hand to the lift.

This last blow caused my blood to boil. Throwing caution to the winds, I went for him, raining a succession of stinging blows upon his face.

With the yellow streak reasserting itself within him, the hulking bully began to work his way backward along the footropes, holding on the jackstay with one hand and protecting himself with the other.

Having chased him to the bunt of the sail, he was completely in my power. I could have smashed him clean off the yard but his cringing attitude caused me to spurn him and return to finish furling the sail.

In return for this decency, the dirty sneak cast loose the inner gasket, setting the escaped sail flapping over the yard, and all but finishing me.

After this last dastardly move, thinking that he had better make himself scarce, he committed himself to the royal backstay, shouting as he started downward:

"I'll get you yet!"

CHAPTER XXVII

THE DERELICT

AFTER six weeks battling, we crossed fifty South in the Pacific, meaning that our passage of the Horn had been completed.

The weather cleared, the winds were fair, our course northward.

With warm clothes, warm food, and brightening skies, the old world of comfort and wealth was swimming back again into our ken.

Standing at the lookout, one afternoon, with the rigors through which we had passed already fading, I was again turning to daydreams of California and its gold. In the absorption of these dreams I had failed to keep up a bright watch.

Suddenly the voice of the mate sounded from the quarter:

"Hi, you on the fo'c'sle head, wake up there!"

With quickening sense, I started scanning the

horizon where a dark body arrested my attention, about a mile ahead.

"Vessel one point on the starboard bow," I shouted back.

"All right."

I saw the Skipper gazing intently through his glass, as though studying something carefully, and then, after a consultation with the mate, they altered the course in order to speak her.

As we drew nearer, it became apparent that the stranger had been dismasted. Mr. MacDonald, who came up beside me at the lookout, observed:

"It's a derelict."

The *Flying Spray* was brought close by, when her yards were backed and preparations were made for launching a boat to go aboard and examine her.

Mr. MacDonald took charge of the boarding party and soon we were bobbing over the crests toward the mysterious stranger.

"I dunno why the Old Man should be so anxious for us to board her," said MacDonald. "Ain't his style to hold up for things like derelicts when he's out for a record passage. Judgin'

by the way he kept his glass on her, it looks as though he had seen her before."

As we came nearer, the clean, clear lines of the abandoned vessel appeared distinctly. Though sorely stricken, she was unmistakably a thoroughbred.

"Aye, I thought it 'ud be more than a common 'un, that would be gettin' the Old Man's attention. This is one o' the beauties, wonder who it can be?"

We rowed around to the stern, hoping to read her name, but the counter had been smashed beyond recognition.

"She's down by the stern, we'll board her up for'ard."

Drawing alongside by the fore chains, Mr. MacDonald clambered over the side, instructing me to follow, carrying an ax and a lantern.

From the appearance of the vessel she had not been long abandoned, evidently having been hove down and dismasted by a sudden squall which caught her unawares, affording the crew opportunity to get away only with their lives.

All her masts were gone. Overside, the mainmast was still pounding, held captive by the

lanyards which remained unsevered. The other lanyards had been cut away.

Clambering up the fo'c'sle head, the mate examined her bell, exclaiming:

"Holy smoke! It's the *Phantom!*"

"What, that hoodoo ship of No Loss and Great Gain Gertridge?"

"Aye, aye. Same one as Captain Peabody commanded time of the beriberi passage in China Seas."

"I saw her leave New York about eight months ago."

"Yes, she went out to 'Frisco, and now, no doubt, she's on her way home with a cargo that ought to include a lot of Californian gold."

The mate's voice was unduly excited, and without concealing his eagerness, he rushed aft and made straight for the cabin.

I followed and the two of us made a most exacting search without finding anything to encourage our quest.

"Perhaps the beggars took it off with them," I suggested.

"Couldn't possibly, me son. If it was bad enough to abandon ship, these chaps fled sudden,

and you can bet your sweet life they didn't have no chance for salving gold."

"Well, where could it be stowed, then?"

"That's what I'm goin' to find out."

We were about to give up the search, when the mate stumbled into the lazarette and I heard a glad hail:

"Here it is!"

Rushing down there I found him up to his shoulders in cases of bullion, probably to the value of hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Here in this dark, evil smelling cavern, with the raping seas already swooping round her, was a treasure far beyond our most sanguine dreams.

In the first mad ecstasy of this discovery, Mr. MacDonald was almost beside himself, shouting out:

"Here's an end to goin' to sea. Here's where I'll buy a farm, at last."

Ripping open one of the boxes, we found that it contained its full quota of yellow metal.

Placing this sample case upon our shoulders and pledging ourselves to secrecy, we came up out of the lazarette only to find that One-thumbed Jerry, one of the boat crew, had been

eavesdropping, and now with the cat out of the bag, all hands were intoxicated with the news.

"A pretty kettle o' fish," the mate muttered in disgust.

To vent his feelings, he kicked One-thumbed Jerry clean across the deck, but the evil looking fellow took it all and leered back:

"We're goin' to git our share, Mister, an' don't cher forgit it."

As we jumped into the boat, the mate ordered them to return to the *Flying Spray,* but no one moved.

Threats, cuffs, and kicks were unavailing.

Finally, in desperation, he burst out:

"What's the matter with ye?"

"We ain't goin' to leave that gold," was the sullen answer.

It was not until he promised that we would return, that the boat's crew consented to put back to the *Flying Spray.*

As soon as we were aboard our own ship, the mate and Captain Peabody retired to the cabin. As they were going, the Captain motioned me to follow.

Seated at the cabin table, he inquired:

"Well, Mr. MacDonald, what is it?"

"It's the *Phantom,* Sir."

At this information the Skipper's face took on a haunted look, the nearest thing to fear that I had ever seen on his inscrutable countenance.

There was a moment of pregnant silence, in which we heard the cabin clock ticking.

"And what's the *Phantom* got aboard?"

"I should say about a million worth of gold, Sir. Enough to make us all rich."

I expected to see the Captain show the same contagious joy as the rest; instead there came an ominous shadow.

"Don't like it. Nothing good 'ill come of it. We better leave the stuff alone, Mr. MacDonald."

"Pardon me, Sir. But that sounds like insanity. Leave a million in gold?"

"I'm afraid of it," said the Captain, an unearthly pallor showing the terrible strain he was under. Evidently the old curse of the *Phantom* had laid its grip upon his mind.

We were both forgetting our place and starting to argue against the Skipper, when he put his hand to his breast and suddenly collapsed.

At first, I thought that he was dead, but the faint fluttering remained, and with the heartbeat reviving, we carried him into his bunk.

Torn between two fires, the big mate stood watching over him. At last he opened his eyes, whereat, without the slightest consideration, MacDonald plunged straight into the old argument.

"Remember the kind of crew we've got," expostulated the Captain. "To bring gold aboard with such a gang would only be inviting murder and mutiny."

"I guess we can handle 'em," said the mate with vast assurance.

Being too weak to oppose him further, in a halting voice, the stricken Captain finally authorized the putting out of boats for the salving of the gold.

"I suppose I can't do anything else," he said weakly. "But I feel in my bones, nothing good will ever come of it."

"I don't understand what you mean, Sir," said the incredulous mate.

"Well, I'm not superstitious, Mr. Mac-

Donald. But I've sailed on the *Phantom,* as you know. I tell you frankly, I'm afraid of her, and anything that comes out of her. There's not gold enough in all the world to cure me of that fear."

CHAPTER XXVIII

COMMAND

WHATEVER dread Captain Peabody may have entertained in the privacy of his cabin, he kept it to himself when once the gold of the *Phantom* had been safely stowed in his own lazarette.

The day after his heart attack, he was out on deck as cool and self-contained as ever.

It was the opinion of the crew that he intended to put into Valparaiso for settlement of the treasure, and some of the Bloody Forties made bold to treat with him as to his plan of distribution. The packet rats were already swollen up with the conceit of wealth. All idea of discipline seemed suddenly to have left them. They were indeed becoming quite good sailors, when the news of gold worked utter demoralization.

Accordingly, they all marched aft in a body under the leadership of One-thumbed Jerry.

The Captain was pacing the poop, when the spokesman stepped forward:

"Beggin' yer pardon, Sir, but seein' as we're all entitled to a fair share o' the gold, we was jus' goin' to inquire what was yer plan, Sir?"

The Old Man stopped his pacing, came forward to the rail and faced the men with a slight raising of the eyebrows:

"Who asked you to come aft here?"

"We jus' wanted to talk it over, Sir."

"There's one Captain on this clipper, not fifty."

"But, Sir, we're entitled to be talked to fair."

"You're entitled to mind your own business."

"But——"

"I'm not running any debating society! I know my plans, and I shall abide by them.

"And now, my fine fellows, you may lay aft and get ready to holystone the deck for your trouble. I'll see that the mates keep you at it till they work a bit of the impudence out of your system."

"We ain't done nothin' but ask fer our rights," screamed One-thumbed Jerry.

"All right, since a job on deck isn't enough

for you and your big mouth, you can spend another twelve hours aloft polishing the yards."

"But, I only meant——"

"You'll spend eighteen hours polishing the yards. Another peep, and I'll make it twenty-four, without a drop of water or a bite to eat."

A torrent of frantic abuse from One-thumbed Jerry was cut short by a gorilla backhander from the giant mate.

"Now, then, sandstone and canvas, and up aloft with ye."

"I'll eat the liver out o' ye yet, ye big Bluenose slob."

As the mate finally collared him, and kicked him howling onto the shrouds, the voice of the Captain sounded:

"Twenty-four hours for that rat, Mister."

A heart-breaking howl was One-thumbed Jerry's final shot as he started on his awful penance.

As for the rest, they were already on their prayer handles scouring away with the sandstone in the slush, a most salutary example to watchmates that had minded their own business.

As the hours dragged by, Hell Fire Mac-

Donald drove them to utter exhaustion. He went without sleep for twenty-four hours, just to give himself the joy of putting the finishing touches to One-thumbed Jerry.

When that wide-mouthed individual finally came to the end of his penalty, he had to be carried down and stowed in his bunk, where doubtless he had opportunity to reflect on a master, physically weak, who backed up his authority with a terrible wallop.

CHAPTER XXIX

IN THE CHURCHYARD WATCH

IN the words of Chips, "It was as dark as the Earl of Hell's riding boots."

Rogues and villains could not have asked for anything more to their taste. In that watch, from twelve to four, I was standing my lookout on the t'gallant fo'c'sle head. Toward eight bells my suspicions were aroused by the sound of footsteps just under the break. One could hardly see a cable's length away. Out of that void, there floated up the sound of voices.

So earnest was the conversation that I surmised that it boded ill at this unholy hour. Coming to the edge of the starboard ladder, I paused, and then my heart went "phutt" as the voices of Duggan and One-thumbed Jerry floated upward.

Here at last was proof positive of what we had suspicioned ever since the beginning of the voy-

age. These two crooks were accomplices after all.

Duggan in reminiscent mood was living over the old days.

"D'ye remember, Jerry, the time we was pig-stickin' that cop on Maiden Lane in New York?"

"Blast yer eyes, an' that's what's brought us out on this bloody hooker, Duggan, me bhoy."

"Well, it's an ill wind that profits nobody. I was just thinkin' out best luck yet was the time we was chased out o' New York town.

"Aye, I've been homesick fer the lights o' Cherry Street, fer Big Moll, an' Swivel Eyed Sue, fer Billy McGlory's place, an' all the rest. I've had a belly full o' holystone and gut-rot. This sure is one proper hell-ship. But seein' the luck what's comin' to us here, I'll say it's worth it."

"But, I'm tellin' ye, I've had enough o' that there Yankee Bible pounder, an' his hazin'. I'm fer startin' in this very night, an' cleanin' out the swine. We got the gold, what's the good o' waitin'?"

"Now, yer talkin'."

"Rip the bloody tripes out o' 'em this very night."

Many of the choice spirits of the "Bloody Forties" were there. I detected the voices of Finnigen, Music Murphy, Mike Curon, Andy Slewers, and the Curly Kid. All alike were evidently in favor of an immediate attack upon the afterguard.

But Duggan thought otherwise.

"No that ain't the idea, just yet, boys."

"Why?"

"Because, we're too far off soundings. I ain't sure that I can navigate as far out as this. Let the auld man bring her in, till she's almost there, an' then's the time to polish him off."

"Where's he bound?"

"Valparaiso, just as we expected."

"How d'ye know?"

"Seen him prickin' it off on the chart."

"An' what's yer idea, Duggan, when we get off Valparaiso?—to finish 'em off, an' then sail her into the roads yerself?"

"Not on your life. If we did that we'd all swing, sure as guns is iron."

"What is it then, big feller, spiel it out."

"My idea is to let the Psalm-singer an' the Bluenose do the navigatin' fer us, then croak 'em, sudden like, at the end, an' them what wants their share can come along, the rest can go to Fiddler's Green."

"How so?"

"Why, as soon as we've polished off the Skipper an' mate, we'll scuttle this hooker, take the gold off in the boats an' let her sink with every tricky guy aboard."

"That's right. There ain't no secrets told by them what's gone to Davy Jones."

"Every mother's son we ain't sure of, can go under along wi' the ruddy clipper."

"An' what about the second mate?"

"That Blandy's a bloody Englishman; ought to kill him with the rest."

"Aye, but he's no friend o' the Skipper. He'd cut throats as fast as any fer a bag o' gold."

"How d'ye know that, Jerry?"

"Ain't I seen the look on his mug when we was towin' the stuff in the after cabin. Shiver me deadlights, I knows the look."

"But I wouldn't trust no Blandy guy."

"Why?"

"'Cause he's one o' them Englishers, what wants to hog the whole blame show."

"Yer right there."

Here the Irish strain found itself in unison.

"The only good Englishman is a croaked one."

"We'll make a good one out o' Mister Blandy, or if we don't he'll make a mess out o' us."

"An' what about them two poop ornaments in the midship house?"

With gooseflesh rising all over me, I was bending far over to hear my fate, when a shrill whistle, and the bull-like voice of Hell Fire MacDonald:

"Where are you keepin', Mister Duggan?"

To cover up his steps, Duggan came bounding up the starboard ladder, and before I could save myself, collided with me, as I rose from my spying position.

"I'll fix yez," he hissed in my ear. There was no time just then for thought of anything but his own safety.

Again, the voice of MacDonald boomed out:

"Where are ye, Mr. Duggan. Why the devil don't ye answer?"

Presently, from far out on the flying jib boom the voice of Duggan floated back:

"I've just got 'em out here overhauling the headsails, Sir."

I would have bolted for the poop at that very moment, to testify against him. But One-thumbed Jerry suddenly came out of nowhere, and poked me warningly with a knife.

"One peep out o' ye, an' we'll smash yer dead-lights."

CHAPTER XXX

CATASTROPHE

SOMEWHERE aft, Mr. MacDonald was shouting out a volley of orders.

A sudden squall to windward had set all hands rushing for stations.

"Stand by, royal halyards!"

"Down jib!"

"Keep the fores'll set, Mister, to pay her head off!"

With the squall roaring down upon us, there came the shout:

"All hands on deck to shorten sail!"

Mr. Blandy, who had come out in his shirt tail, ran to the fo'c'sle door, repeating:

"A-l-l hands on deck, to shorten s-a-i-l!"

As I dashed aft, both watches were already clewing up the t'gallants. The buntlines were no sooner snugged than there came the order:

"Clew up the mainsail!"

Glancing aft, I saw that the Captain had come

out in his pajamas, and was taking charge in the crisis. There was something clamoring within, urging me toward the poop. But discipline and the need of the ship went before all else.

Taking in the mainsail looked as though it would prove a ticklish job. The wind was shrieking through the rigging, and the black seas were boiling white, as they surged along our lee.

Mr. Duggan eased the sheet, and the mate fought his way over to the tack ready to let it go, as soon as the clew garnet and buntlines were manned.

"Let her go!" yelled the mate, slipping the tack.

"Haul away!"

The great sail bellied out, thrashing heavily, and all hands hauled furiously. At last the tearing, slatting canvas was dragged close to the yard and Duggan, standing by the weather brace, sang out:

"' Way 'loft, and furl it."

I was the first man into the rigging, with Joe Parish, our finest sailor close behind. The two of us leading all others as we raced aloft, striv-

ing for the point of honor on the weather yard-arm.

Across the futtocks we raced, heel and toe, and out onto the maintop where our hair was blown like ribbons.

If the wind was piping up on deck, aloft on that reeling height, it was blowing like a thousand furies.

One could hear nothing but the everlasting thunder and roar of slatting canvas. Strangely and mysteriously, I felt a fear clutching at my throat.

As I still hesitated, Joe was already laying out onto the yard, while others were crowding up behind me.

"Come on, git a move on!"

"Out o' me way!"

"What's holdin' ye?"

At the weather reef-erring, Joe was calling to me, with a lusty summons:

"Come on, matey!"

For some strange reason I still hesitated, while the picture of Duggan standing by the weather brace, as we raced upward, seemed to paralyze me.

Those behind were starting to crowd past me, when out from the far end of the yard there came a sharp report, as the weather brace was suddenly shot off, and the yard released from its terriffic tension, snapped forward like a catapult.

Over the note of slatting canvas, a voice shrieked out:

"Oh, matey!"

Clutching wildly, Joe Parish was hurled into the blackness, and landed with a sickening thud upon the deck, seventy feet below.

The rest of us were left clinging for dear life to the murderous yard, and then, some one on the deck captured the brace, and the yard was once more steadied.

It was too late to save the sail. With a volley of pealing thunder, the canvas soared upward, thrashing madly for a moment, then with a swift ripping and rending, it split from erring to erring, a foot below the jackstay, and collapsed into the sea.

Swarming down the shrouds, from the futile task which had cost us our finest sailor, we found

Captain Peabody bending over the shapeless and pathetic heap.

Crowding close, I was surprised to see tears in the Skipper's eyes, as he muttered, half aloud, half to himself:

"Too late!"

Near by, I noticed Duggan, glaring at me in a surly manner. In a flash the meaning of it all came over me. Poor old Joe had died because of a dastardly attack intended for me!

As I was first in the rigging, Duggan had surmised that I would be first out onto the yard, and while he could not see in the blackness, he had cast off the weather brace in a cowardly effort to seal my lips.

His ruse had failed, and he had only succeeded in hurling the unsuspecting Joe to his doom.

In a sudden wave of passion, I rushed forward and clasping the Captain by the arm, pointed at the murderer, standing there red-handed.

Before I had time to speak, the Captain read my meaning.

"I know, my lad. I know, already. But we'll say nothing for the present."

After breakfast, the following morning, we stood around bareheaded, while our finest sailor lay there, outlined beneath the folds of his country's flag.

"We now commit this body to the deep——"

With an open prayer book, I beheld Captain Peabody in another light. He stood forth indeed like a priest, and a man of God.

There was strong faith ringing behind his words, as he read on to the end of the burial service.

"Until the sea shall give up its dead."

The prayer book was closed, as a signal.

A man at each top corner of the grating lifted, and Joe, with a slight splash, went to his last berth.

Captain Peabody, with bared head, stood for a moment looking after, with the wistful eye of one who was not far from that same journey.

It was the mate, coughing uneasily, that called him up in the after cabin.

In a vastly different voice than that of the prayer book, a voice like that of a whiplash, he ordered:

"All right, Mister. Muster all hands aft."

The men came trooping to the break of the poop, while the officers climbed to the high place of authority.

Facing the third mate, with the attitude of a judge pronouncing sentence, Captain Peabody said:

"Duggan, stand forward."

As the culprit advanced, he proceeded:

"You, Duggan, are no longer an officer of this ship. I saw you with my own eyes cast off the weather brace, thus causing the death of one of our crew.

"You have committed murder on the high seas, without the least extenuating circumstance. Until the end of this voyage you shall remain a prisoner, and at the end you shall go to the gallows, as sure as there is law and justice.

"And now, bos'n, put him in irons and lock him up in the after cabin."

While Duggan heavily shackled was being led away to his narrow prison, the Captain proceeded:

"I appoint Mr. Lawrence Curtis to be third officer of the *Flying Spray*. You will get your things, Mr. Curtis, and move aft at once."

CHAPTER XXXI

KIDNAPED

I HAD intended to tell the Captain of the plotting, overheard the previous night, but Mr. Blandy's presence in the cabin caused me to put it off, easing myself with the idea that with Duggan under arrest there was no immediate danger.

The "Bloodies" eyed me with suspicion, but I was determined to show them that it would take more than threatening to make me back down.

Accordingly, I took charge as if nothing had happened, hitting hard and quick at the first sign of a maligner or hanger-back.

Coming on deck for the middle watch, the *Flying Spray* was rushing through a night of unrelieved blackness, with her royals furled.

"Ye gods, what a night for dirty work!" I muttered as I went forward with the watch to tauten the nip of the braces.

As I stood there, directing the gang, their chanteys and timing cries were strangely missing.

A watch working in darkness and utter silence is extremely disconcerting to an officer, as there is no sign by which to tell whether they are under control or not.

From the weather side, I gave the orders to haul and belay, while the sullen silence to leeward began to fill me with apprehension.

In the thick gloom of that squally night, standing there alone upon decks that seemed to rustle and crepitate with conspiracy, I rebuked myself that I had not already spoken to the Skipper.

There was a feeling that my watch was getting out out of hand. As my apprehension increased, the real peril of my position dawned upon me. In case of foul play, darkness covered everything. They might easily throw me over the side, to drown in the wet dark of the Pacific, with no witness of any kind to testify against them.

In a rush of dread, I almost turned tail and fled to the poop, but now, of all times, it was

up to me to stand fast. I knew that they all expected me to show the white feather, and just to prove who was master, I ordered them onto the fo'c'sle head to tauten the headsails. Springing up the ladder to lead the way, I suddenly encountered One-thumbed Jerry emerging from nowhere, with his knife, just as he had threatened the night before.

I started to call, but the roaring wind drowned my cry and before a move could be made in self-defense, a half dozen packet rats were pinioning my arms, while their leader growled:

"Damn yer eyes, another yell and we'll blow yer brains out."

With arms powerless, I fastened my teeth in his bared arms, but was finally overwhelmed by sheer numbers, and gagged so that my cries went out in a choking gurgle.

"Pitch the son of a——overboard!" yelled One-thumbed Jerry, striving to stanch the flow of blood, where my teeth had been buried.

Struggling, tumbling, kicking, lashing, I was shoved and dragged toward the lee rail, and all but pitched into the sea.

Through it all, one idea was uppermost in my mind, if I went overboard, I would not go alone. At least one of these scoundrels would accompany me.

As the gang were pausing for breath, Rip Kelley, with apparent inspiration, burst out:

"Ain't no good chuckin' 'im over, might as well hang on fer a bit."

"Why?"

"Might use him yet, to help us out."

"Never thought o' that. All right, into the fore peak with 'im."

Without further ceremony, I was hauled into the dark, foul smelling recess, where I was bound so securely that I could move neither hand nor foot and left rolling about in utter impotence.

Before long, Finnigen and One-thumbed Jerry came in to treat with me.

After lighting a candle, and removing the gag so that I might speak, they inquired:

"D'ye want ter save yer life?"

"Of course I do."

"All right, can ye navigate?"

"Yes."

"D'ye think that ye could take this hooker anywheres?"

"With the right charts, I could."

"How d'ye know ye wouldn't be goin' wrong?"

"I've been workin' out the ship's position every day for the past two months."

In the flickering gleam of the candle, Finnigen's savage countenance took on a conciliatory aspect:

"All right, kid. We ain't meant nothin' dirty. We can't get nowheres without navigation, an' I guess you're jus' what we're needin'."

"I don't understand."

"Aw, ye're about as thick as the starboard cathead. We're goin' to grab the gold, o' course, an' we want some one what knows, to put us inter the nearest port."

"Well, you can count me out," I answered emphatically.

With a burst of blasphemy, Finnigen was prepared to treat the interview as ended, but his partner was more patient.

"Hol' on, not quite so fast. We ain't goin' to tell ye nothin'. Jus' work out the course, Mister

Cub Captain, an' at the end, you'll get your pile."

The very thought sickened me, but it took a lot of explaining to make the rogues understand.

"Why, wasn't yez goin' to California fer gold?"

"Yes."

"Well, here's yer chance fer more than ye'll git in all the diggins. Navigate the hooker fer us, an' you an' yer mate can get off with enough gold to fix yez as grand gents fer the rest o' yer days."

"I'd die in the poorhouse, before I'd take my pile that way."

"What's the difference how ye take it?"

"All the difference in the world. Gold that comes with evil' brings evil."

"Ye're pretty good on the Sunday School stuff, sonny, but by an' by p'raps ye'll talk sense."

"I'll stand by the Captain, whatever happens."

"When the Cappen's gone t' Fiddler's Green, who'll ye stand by then?"

"I'll stand by the ship."

Here Finnigen broke in, in disgust:

"Only one way to do anything wi' the likes

o' him, an that's to pound it into the top o' his head wi' an iron marlinespike."

The other rogue was loath to give up, but his patience was ebbing.

"Who d'ye think ye are?" he shrilled.

"I'm an officer of this ship."

At this, Finnigen suddenly drew off and hit me a smashing blow between the eyes. But I was too mad to notice the pain.

"Hit a man with his hands tied, you dirty skunk. I'll teach you your place when I'm out on deck again."

"There ain't goin' to be no gettin' out fer you, till ye're carried out as food fer sharks."

With this parting shot, Finnigen started away in disgust. But One-thumbed Jerry saw that the whole success of their scheme hinged upon obtaining a navigator. Coming close up to me, he snarled:

"Either ye're goin' to do the navigatin' or by—ye're goin' over the side. We'll give ye just one hour to decide which it 'll be."

CHAPTER XXXII

A COUNCIL OF WAR

AFTER some time, the hatch was again opened, in a stealthy manner.

"Who's there?" I called.

"Sssh," came the warning, and a moment later some one was undoing the rope yarn with which I was securely bound.

Still in darkness, I inquired:

"Who are you?"

"I'm Rip Kelley, the guy that you an' your mate saved off Cape Stiff. I ain't forgot, that's why I'm here to help yez make a get-away."

"Thanks, Kelley. And, come to think of it, you were the one that kept them from pitching me into the sea."

"Aye, an' they're goin' to do next time, sure. Finnigen's mad enough to eat the heart out o' ye."

"What's holding them?"

"They're scrappin' jus' now in the fo'c'sle

with Blandy's gang. While they're at it below, ye've got your chance fer a get-away, but beat it fast."

Coming out of the forepeak, it was inky black. At the sound of a footstep, Kelley motioned me back, and swinging a leaden heaver with precision, he sent somebody slithering down upon the deck.

"Who's that?"

"Paddy, he's out o' business fer the time, an' the coast's clear.

I needed no further bidding to bound down the weather side, and seconds later came racing up ladder.

Captain Peabody, who was pacing the poop with loaded pistol, met me at the rail.

"I was afraid the scoundrels had got you."

"No, Sir, but almost."

"How did you get clear?"

"They had me in forepeak, and Rip Kelley let me out, on account of rescue off Horn."

"Bully for Kelley. And what do you think of conditions for'ard."

"Couldn't be worse, Sir. I've got something to tell you, that I overheard last night."

"Last night! In heaven's name, why didn't you tell me before?"

"On account of Mr. Blandy."

At mention of the second mate, the Skipper's eyes flashed with anger.

Leaving the bos'n on guard on the poop, he led Mr. MacDonald and myself down the after-companion, where the gold was stored. On inspection, everything was as usual.

Stationing the steward to ward off possible eavesdroppers, the Captain motioned us to be seated around the chart-room table.

Still showing traces of suppressed anger, he said, "I'm sorry that I couldn't include Mr. Blandy in this conference, but I must tell you frankly I don't trust him. Which shows how gold bedevils an officer."

"Where is he now?" I inquired.

"Off watch."

"No fear of his spying on us?"

"Trust the steward to prevent that. And now, Mr. Curtis, let's hear your story."

Briefly, I told them of my experience in the forepeak, and then went on to repeat the conversation which I had overheard the night

THE "FLYING SPRAY" SANG WITH THE JOY OF THE HOMEWARD-BOUNDER

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previous between Duggan and the packet rats.

"The idea seems to be for them to allow you to navigate as far as the coast of South America, and just off Valparaiso, after killing you and Mr. MacDonald, to scuttle the ship and make off in boats with the gold."

"How do they know that I'm bound for Valparaiso?"

"Duggan said that he saw you pricking it off the chart."

"I had planned to go there for readjustment, but now with these blackguards conspiring together, it rather upsets things a bit. What do you think we had better do, Mr. MacDonald?"

"Well, Sir, I think the best thing is to take on wood and water at Juan Fernandez, and put back for our home port."

"It's hardly my style to turn tail in the midst of a voyage."

"That may be, Sir. But we've got to consider the cargo which we have salved. A dozen trips around the Horn could not net as much as this gold, and it seems to me that its safety ought to be our first consideration."

"You are wrong, there, Mr. MacDonald."

"Why?"

"Our first consideration ought to be our ship."

"Yes. I guess that's right, Sir."

Although the mate agreed, I had a feeling that he, like all the others, was smitten with gold fever.

The Captain was thinking of his vessel, the mate of the gold. But both alike were thinking of safety, and with this thought uppermost, it was agreed that it would be disastrous to proceed to Valparaiso.

"Taking everything into consideration," said the Captain, "I guess there is only one thing to do, and that is to come about and lay a course for New York. If we can deliver this cargo, as Mr. MacDonald observes, we will be doing a fine stroke of business.

"We are constantly at peril from the plottings going on aboard this ship. From the moment we brought the gold aboard, we brought trouble. It behooves us at all times to be prepared.

"We've got all the packet rats against us, as well as the gang under Blandy. Just as One-thumbed Jerry's crowd will make a bid on one

side, Blandy's bunch will challenge him on the other."

"That ought to be a good thing for us."

"Precisely. While these two factions are mutually suspicious, we have all the more chance of sailing a middle course."

"Meanwhile, who is there that we can trust?"

"Tug Wilson," I answered immediately.

"Good fellow," said the Captain.

"Then there's the bos'n, and Chips and Sails, that gives us the whole of the midship house."

"What of the Cook?"

"On ordinary occasions, the galley hates the fo'c'sle. But Bill Sleary's head'll be turned with gold."

"And who have we got for'ard?"

"There's Ned Cavender, and George Miggs, Matt Noyes, Bill Darts, and Pop and Red, and perhaps one or two more. If it comes to a showdown, there's perhaps a dozen that we can count on, a dozen against fifty."

"Looks like pretty stiff odds."

"Aye, but don't forget that our dozen will have arms and food, and best of all the mob for'ard will be weakened by factions.

"You may make arrangements immediately, Mr. MacDonald, to shift all the dependables to the cabin."

"It may cause suspicions, Sir."

"Don't care if it does. Cat's out of the bag anyway, and we'd better be too early, than too late in our precautions."

"One more point, Mr. MacDonald. We don't want to take any chance of being attacked from the rear. From now on, allow no one abaft the mainmast, outside our own crowd. Let the packet rats know that if they violate this rule they will be shot on sight."

CHAPTER XXXIII

'BOUT SHIP

IT was necessary, before starting on the return voyage, to fill up our water casks, and obtain a fresh supply of wood for the galley stove.

As we were just off the Island of Juan Fernandez, the Captain decided to put in there, before coming about.

At daylight we made the island, about forty miles distant, and at noon dropped anchor in Cumberland Bay, on the northeast side.

As this was the island of Robinson Crusoe, I was thrilled at the opportunity of putting my feet ashore there.

Mr. Blandy was in charge of the landing party, taking two boats filled with empty water casks, while I took another boat for wood. The Captain and Mr. MacDonald very wisely stood by the ship, thus cutting off the chance of a raid on the gold.

This Island was naturally of far greater interest to me, because of Robinson Crusoe and his man Friday. Often had I pictured myself in imagination cast away on this deserted spot, and now it seemed too good to be true that I was really coming ashore in the place where that school-boy hero had been for so many years a solitary exile.

It was a lovely spot, wild and mountainous, of abundant vegetation. The smell of the land was doubly sweet to my nostrils after long breathing of the pungent brine.

Scattered along the hillside, overlooking the bay, were cozy cottages made of straw, with leaf-covered roofs. The straw and palm leaves were so interwoven as to be completely storm-proof.

From the distance, these tiny homes looked very inviting. The natives were all insistent that I should visit them, invitations which were politely declined, as the Captain had given strict orders that the work of getting water and wood should be rushed.

There were but eleven inhabitants in the Island, all native born Chilians, but one, he

was the harbor pilot, a smart looking State of Maine man with a native wife.

The water which came down from the mountain in springs was brought to the shore by wooden conductors, which put out just high enough to float a cask underneath for filling.

While Mr. Blandy and his party were busy making trips with the water casks, I obtained my wood, bringing one load myself, while the natives brought out three other loads. Native boats also brought us out a large supply of delicious fruits, especially pleasing to the palate after months of "salt horse."

All our necessary supplies having been taken aboard, Captain Peabody requested the pilot to get us clear of the land before nightfall. Late in the afternoon, we put to sea, favored by an offshore wind, coming down from the mountains.

Some of the squalls were very severe, but they were behind us, favoring our safe departure. Off soundings, we dropped the pilot into a frail native boat, and hauling the wind onto our port quarter, began to crowd on sail.

There is something delightful in the first

gentle fall and rise of a clipper to the 'scend of the sea. The sails were sheeted home, the *Flying Spray* laid steeply over in the freshening breeze, while Robinson Crusoe's land grew dim astern.

With night coming on, stars began to appear, the Southern Cross, and the Magellan Clouds, constellations with which I was now growing familiar. The Southern Cross is composed of four brilliant stars forming the outer points of a cross. The Clouds are a golden mist upon the sky, of about the same density as the Milky Way.

The strange sights of Juan Fernandez, followed by the excitement of getting to sea again had filled me with wonder, so that I had quite forgotten about the "Bloody Forties," and the lust of gold. A sudden commotion, amidships, caused me to come back from dreamland with a start.

Getting their directions from the stars, it had dawned upon the crew that the Skipper had changed his course.

Reading the meaning of the fresh supply of water, they became aware that to frustrate their

designs he was heading back toward the Horn.

A sudden rush of an angry mob in the waist was the first intimation of open revolt. With consternation, I saw that that which we most dreaded, had happened: the mutineers were being led by Mr. Blandy. This meant that the two factions had come together.

Our hope of holding out against them looked mighty slim at sight of the second officer, backed up by that solid phalanx.

Captain Peabody and myself were the only ones on the poop at the moment. Blandy was moving with utmost assurance, when suddenly in front of the mainmast he was halted by the Skipper.

"What are you doing there, Mr. Blandy?"

"We're comin' aft, Sir, for our share of the gold."

"Do you realize that this is mutiny?"

The Captain's voice carried with it an awful sting. The supercilious Englishman shrugged his shoulders, but one could catch symptoms of weakness behind his forced bravado.

Coming to the edge of the quarter, standing unabashed, the Skipper burst out.

"Men, you have been led astray by false officers. Get back there and haul taut the weather main brace."

"Go to hell."

"All right, I'll give you one more chance to return to duty. You may choose between getting your rightful share of the salvage, at end of voyage, or death and disaster. It must be one or the other, which?"

"We'll have the gold, you old psalm-singin' hypocrite."

Finnigen, flushed with rum, made a rush up the weather ladder, where the Captain dealt him a terrific jolt, and sent him headlong into the waist.

At this first blow of the battle, things happened so quickly that I could hardly tell what came next. From aft, our own people were rushing out of the cabin, through the after companion, a perfect fusillade of shooting signalizing their arrival on the scene.

Most of the musketry was wild and erratic, causing nevertheless a certain hesitation, while Mr. MacDonald sang out from somewhere.

"Get that swine of a Blandy!"

Blandy's reply was to jump upon the midship house, where from the shelter of the mainmast he took pot shots at the hated mate.

After the first burst of firing, there occurred a general withdrawal of the mutineers, while the Captain still dominated the situation from the weather rail.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE MUTINY

SEVERAL times the Captain called to Mr. Blandy to stand forth, but there was no sign of the renegade.

Finally, he muttered, "I'm going to get him, dead or alive."

Going down into his cabin, he reappeared a moment later with a pair of steel handcuffs, while a long raglan served to conceal his weapons. This concealment was characteristic, as there was nothing bellicose about Captain Peabody.

Ordering Mr. MacDonald to hold the poop, he took me along, and the two of us advanced toward the galley, where we had seen Blandy disappear.

For myself, I was almost paralyzed with terror, expecting every moment to be shot at from ambush, or to feel the points of hidden knives.

Seeing my agitation, the Skipper cautioned:

"Steady, my lad, steady! And don't do any shooting, if you can help it. We don't want useless bloodshed."

This word was indeed reassuring, as from the threatenings it certainly looked as though we would all be killed in short order.

When we reached the midship house, the Skipper paused, calling:

"Come out here, Mr. Blandy!"

As no answer came back, he advanced resolutely toward the galley door, near the forward end of the house. The passage was about five feet wide, and just as we reached the door, with yells like demons let loose, the "Bloodies" rushed upon us with drawn knives.

Captain Peabody realized that the time had come to demonstrate that moral courage was superior to brute force. With a pistol in each hand, pointed at the heads of those nearest him, and a cutlass at his side, he stood immovable.

I also cocked my gun, but on account of the frightful agitation within, felt utterly helpless.

To my surprise, the mob suddenly stood at bay. One sweep of that mob would have overwhelmed us. But, a couple of paces away they

halted as effectually as though they had encountered an immovable rock.

Captain Peabody was a famous pistol shot, equally proficient with either hand. The crew watching his fingers trembling on the hair triggers, were fully aware of the menace.

A momentary lull in the yells and threats, gave the Skipper a chance to speak.

"Men, you have found your master!

"I demand that you hand over the second mate."

"We'll hand 'im over like hell!"

"We'll master yez, ye son of a——!"

Finding that it was useless to treat with them, the Skipper said:

"Very well, men. You will not have a bite to eat until you deliver the second officer over to me."

At this, we started to retreat. With the first backward step, the mob sprang at us, like a pack of wolves.

Suddenly, wheeling again, covering them with his pistols, the Skipper threatened:

"The first man that advances another step, dies in his tracks!"

To emphasize this order, he fired just over their heads, causing them to tumble over themselves, in the suddenness of their halt. The smell of powder and smoke held them momentarily, while we backed away as far as the main hatch, and then turned and walked aft.

During the rest of the night, there was no further sign of hostility from the gang forward.

At four bells in the morning watch, the Skipper went to reason with them again.

One-thumbed Jerry, by this time, was mad as a whirling dervish, shrieking and calling the Skipper every outrageous name to which he could lay his tongue.

I thought that the packet rat would surely be dead as he openly defied the uplifted gun; but still with strange forbearance, Captain Peabody did not shoot.

Disdaining their leader, the Skipper addressed the men directly:

"You are allowing yourselves to be misled. I am here to command, you to obey, again I order you to return to duty."

"T'hell with you."

"We're goin' to have the gold."

"Kill the old devil!"

"Let 'im have it!"

In the midst of their threats, the Skipper remained steadfast:

"Stand back, you cowardly villains!"

"Shoot! Shoot! Shoot!"

"Any fool can shoot. I'm here to show you I'm master.

"I will take no life, if I can help it. But, I will bring you to your senses, even yet."

"We're goin' to git some grub."

"You will get nothing, while you disobey orders. I am responsible for this clipper, and for everything on board. If any of you come abaft the mainmast, with the intent to rob, I'll blow your brains out."

This last speech was met by flourishing knives, and shrieks of abuse. Seeing that no impression could be made, the Skipper walked aft.

All through the morning, there was no sign of Blandy. The mutineers sat in open defiance, smoking on the fore hatch, or lolling about in idle dog-watch attitudes. But they were particular to keep to their own end of the ship.

At noon, the wind freshened, and the Skipper ordered in a voice that could be heard fore and aft:

"Take in the royals!"

This order was met with:

"Go to hell!"

"Let the bloody hooker rip!"

As the crew stubbornly refused to obey, our own crowd aft accomplished the job on the main, and mizzen.

As the gang had threatened to throw anybody overboard that came for'ard of the mainmast, the Skipper took Tug Wilson and myself to attend to the fore royal.

By the middle of the afternoon, we were tearing through the water at a terrific clip, the sea making rapidly, and the clipper pitching to her knightheads.

All through that night, shorthanded, we drove, under a tremendous press of canvas. Throughout the blow, the Skipper was too busy with his ship, to attend further to the mutineers.

By the following morning, with the pangs of hunger, they began to show signs of distress.

Noting the mood of the men about breakfast

time, the Skipper again went forward to the galley door.

"Are you ready to hand over the mate, and turn to?"

"Give us our breakfast first."

"No, you will obey orders first."

"We need food."

"You work before you eat."

All through the day, which was clear and fine, we held the *Flying Spray* to her course, while the starving mob forward grew hourly more bitter, as the pangs of hunger took hold of them.

By supper time, they had not eaten for forty-eight hours. Their threatenings and growlings sounded increasingly ominous.

The "Bloodies" in desperation had become a pack of maniacs. This state of things would have an ending soon. There was not the slightest doubt in my mind that some one would be killed.

Realizing the desperate condition for'ard, the Skipper did not trust to any further conferences, but satisfied himself by pacing up and down at the break of the poop.

During all this grueling experience, he had

allowed himself no slightest respite. I was agonized with dread, lest his body should fail in the crisis. Beneath, a baying herd cried out their threats, but the weak man, he of the fluttering heart, paced up and down, up and down, grim and imperturbable.

The night was especially dark, and in expectation of an attack, all hands aft had been armed with various weapons. A death-like stillness prevailed, broken only by the flapping of sails, and the whine of gear.

Suddenly, a slight noise drew my attention to the for'ard gangway, between the house and rail.

"Look out, coming," muttered the Skipper.

"Shall I shoot?"

"No, only one there, wait."

We waited, until the fellow got as far aft as the maindeck capstan, when the Skipper called out:

"Throw up your hands! Now, then, step out, and let's see who you are."

The order was obeyed, forthwith, and there, in the gleam from the cabin alleyway, we beheld the upturned face of Rip Kelley.

CHAPTER XXXV

SIEGE OF THE AFTER GUARD

FROM Rip Kelly, we learned that the mutineers were about to launch a desperate assault.

Realizing that under cover of darkness, everything would be confusion, the Skipper left a man to the wheel, and ordered all the others to retire into the cabin to withstand the attack.

"Hadn't we better fight 'em in the open, Sir?" inquired the mate.

"No, if we can hold the cabin, they will be forced to surrender very soon. They can't possibly go without food much longer."

Anticipating attack at the cabin alleyway, the entrance was barricaded securely, four water casks were rolled up to complete the supports.

All hands were armed with knives and cutlasses, while the after entrance was also effectually closed, but in such a manner as to allow for a possible sally. The companion

leading down to the lazarette remained open.

The Skipper and Mr. MacDonald had a disagreement over this.

"Why Sir, you're leaving the gold in the storeroom at foot of companion, unguarded."

"Lives are more precious than gold, Mister."

"But, won't you at least let me hold the entrance with a musket?"

"My orders are that all hands shall remain in safety here in the cabin, and await developments. There will be no useless bloodshed."

Despite the Skipper's reassuring word, there was a ticklish feeling at the bottom of my spine. With eleven against fifty, I was certain that we would be finished off like cornered rats.

Others were muttering aloud, expressing discontent. Nearly everyone having some better suggestion than the Skipper.

"Why don't we fight 'em on the poop?"

"Ought to make a raid ourselves."

"Better die in the open, where we could at least hit back."

These, and a host of other complaints were cut short, by a rush of many feet across the deck, and with a thundering crash the attacking party

began battering away at the barricaded entrance.

Captain Peabody took charge with the mate, at the alleyway.

Tug Wilson and myself, armed with pistols, were placed aft, to ward off invasion from that quarter.

Almost at the first assault, the oaken door for'ard was splintered. But the heavy water casks, buttressed with a spare spar, held the strain.

From without, in the intermittent silences, there came the voice of Mr. Blandy, urging the gang to renewed effort.

At the sound of the apostate's voice, Hell Fire MacDonald found it difficult to contain himself.

"Just wait 'till I git me hands on ye, Blandy!" he bellowed through the barrier.

What baffled Tug and myself was the fact that no attack was launched against the after entrance.

Listening intently it seemed to us that we heard footsteps, moving stealthily up and down the companion.

"Don't understand it," said Tug. "If those fellows are clearing out the lazarette, why are the others fighting at the cabin alley-way?"

"Hush," I whispered. Again, listening there came the unmistakable sound of heavy burdens, being carried up onto the poop.

"What d'ye make of it, Laurie?"

"It's perfectly plain, what they're up to."

"How's that?"

"Why, they're keeping that crowd banging away at one entrance, to create a counter attraction. While the Skipper and all hands are busy there, the rest of 'em are walkin' off with the bacon."

At thought of the way in which we were allowing ourselves to be duped, a fever of resentment took hold of me.

Why should we squander our opportunity of holding that precious cargo, so foolishly?

The more I thought of it, the more desperate I became in my determination to thwart their plans.

"It's no good arguing with the Skipper," said Tug. "He thinks he knows it all anyway. He

may be a good mariner, but he's a boob at this game."

"Well, as far as I'm concerned, I don't intend to just sit behind this door, and listen to them packet rats walkin' off with the gold."

Between us, we arranged that I should be let out of the after entrance, and stealing up in the darkness catch the gang red-handed, and spread the alarm as to their real design.

"Watch your step!" was Tug's parting advice, as I stole out into the pitch blackness of the companionway.

Coming into the uncertain light on deck, I crawled behind the skylight, and there on the other side, sure enough, the packet rats were busily engaged at loading gold into the port quarter boat.

Everything was being carried on with utmost stealth.

What puzzled me was the apprehensive way in which the packet rats were continually on the lookout to starboard, as though expecting a surprise attack from that quarter.

This did not seem like collusion between the gang at the alleyway and the gang on the poop.

I began to think that Tug and I were perhaps not so clever in our theory. But, what then was the meaning of their strategy?

With curiosity getting the better of me, I crawled across the open, and trusting to the darkness, was making toward the starboard rail, when Paddy Maguire, detecting me from a distance, hurled a heavy missile, roaring out:

"What d'hell are yez doin' there?"

His shot went wide, and in the next instant I heard One-thumbed Jerry reviling him in a loud whisper:

"Now ye've done it, ye bloody fool."

Startled by the sound on the quarter deck, the party attacking at the alleyway suddenly paused, and Mr. Blandy appeared running up the poop ladder. He carried a gun, and at his approach, the packet rats began to fall back.

With the whole of Blandy's gang crowding on at his heels, the meaning of the situation came over me in a flash. It was quite the opposite from what I had anticipated. While one gang were attacking the cabin alleyway, they had evidently expected their accomplices to

bombard the after entrance. Instead of this, the packet rats had quietly set to work loading the quarter boat with gold, hoped to give the others the slip, and put back to Juan Fernandez.

"I thought you were fighting with us!" shrilled out Blandy in a towering rage.

"So we was," answered One-thumbed Jerry.

Without another word, Blandy opened fire upon them, while his gang coming on at his heels fell upon the packet rats pell-mell. In a twinkling the quarter-deck had become a wild mass of charging desperadoes.

In the midst of the fracas, Captain Peabody and Mr. MacDonald arrived upon the scene.

MacDonald was no defensive fighter. The time of suppressed rage in the cabin was too much for him, and now, coming out like a roaring lion, he started straight for the second mate.

Blandy raised his gun and fired point blank, the ball entering MacDonald's chest. But he still came on, roaring.

In terror of that mad charge, Blandy started to step backwards, and then, just as he reached the rail, MacDonald was upon him.

"Look out!" screamed the Captain.

The warning was too late. From the impetus of MacDonald's charge the two of them plunged backwards and disappeared.

CHAPTER XXXVI

OLD AUTHORITY

As though this epic encounter had swallowed up all other contests, the crew found themselves suddenly welded together by the crisis.

"Let go the port quarter boat there," sang out the Skipper.

Involuntarily, all hands obeyed. With a whine of sheaves and a lifting splash, the boat took the water. But, as she was loaded with cases of gold, stowed on one side, she capsized and sank immediately.

Minutes passed before another boat was launched. A rescuing party under the bos'n cruised about for nearly an hour without any sign of the pair. Finally, after all hope was exhausted, they started to return, when a faint cry attracted their attention. Following the sound, they came across MacDonald, in the last

stages of exhaustion. Although wounded, the iron reserve of the Bluenose mate enabled him to fight for life to his last breath.

Encouraged by the discovery of MacDonald, they still searched for another quarter of an hour, but no trace of Blandy.

When they arrived back alongside, the mate was unconscious from wounds and exposure, and had to be swung aboard by a gantline. As they laid him on the deck I almost broke into tears. I had seen many sad sights since joining the *Flying Spray,* regarding them with callous indifference. But Hell Fire MacDonald, personification of strength, lying white and cold, touched me poignantly.

We carried him down to his bunk, where he remained, an invalid throughout the rest of the voyage.

I would have stood by to nurse the poor fellow, who had been such a good friend. But duty called me immediately, to stand by the Captain.

With the rescuing of the mate, the back of the mutiny, for the time being, was broken.

Realizing by infallible sense that command

was again in his hands, Captain Peabody sang out:

"Men, the last order I gave you, which you disobeyed, was:

"Haul taut the weather main brace!

"I now repeat that same order:

"Haul taut the weather main brace!"

With a thunderous, "Aye, aye, Sir!" the crew leaped to obey, hauling the brace with such gusto that one feared they would spring the yard.

"Belay, there," came the next order, followed by another hearty:

"Aye, aye, Sir!"

After this evidence of willing obedience, the Captain sang out:

"All right, Cook, get a good hot meal ready for all hands.

"Meanwhile, Mr. Curtis, start them at it holystoning the deck."

This order was hardly repeated by myself, before all hands were at it, down on their knees, holystoning away, as if their very lives depended on it. For once, I knew what it was to have a watch under me that gave unquestioning obedience.

When the work was fairly started, Captain Peabody turned and gave himself to the old accustomed walk, up and down on the weather side. To see him there, with his calm detachment, it seemed as though nothing out of the ordinary had transpired, as though the mutiny itself had been merely a passing nightmare.

On their prayer-handles, in the slush, more than one of the packet rats cast an inquiring glance at the promenade of that lean, spare figure.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE CAPTAINS' CAPTAIN

FROM the moment the back of the mutiny was broken, authority aboard the *Flying Spray* was enforced unflinchingly, and with an iron hand.

Every day my admiration for Captain Peabody increased. I had always been an inveterate hero worshiper. The more I saw of this master mariner, the more ardently did I accept him as my hero.

Our Latin teacher at Andover once said that success in life was a matter of keeping company with the best. Of course he meant the classics; in daily association with this consummate ship-handler, I found a new truth in the saying. An officer serving under him was bound to be turned out a better product.

Captain Peabody was known as the "Captains' Captain." It was said that he never went

to sea on a long voyage, without making a captain on the way.

The youths of New England that sailed with him, he would seize as relentlessly as a recruiting sergeant, and before the young fellow knew where he was, he made him into the master of a ship.

It never troubled him to find men, he made men. He believed in men. He trusted them. He delegated responsibility unreservedly. At first, I found myself inclined to hold back, at which he admonished:

"One thing you never want to shirk, young man, is responsibility. The more responsibility you take, the more of a man you'll be."

Under this driving mentor, I found myself working up the sights each day, until the navigation of the clipper was practically in my hands.

Tug had the same opportunity at the start, but somehow he fell down in the exacting test, and was consequently ruled out of the Gideon's band.

But while Tug was a disappointment, he seemed to put the highest trust in me.

One day, after I had worked out a Sumner, or position by double altitude, it pleased him so much that he exclaimed:

"You're going to be a great navigator, some day, my lad, and when you are, you will be keeping a great company."

No colonel of a crack regiment had more pride and esprit-de-corps than this high-stepping Yankee Captain. It meant something to be a master mariner when one looked at him.

Living with him, now, in the intimacy of the cabin, I came to see a side to his nature which I had hardly dreamed. Behind the martinet and the disciplinarian, was a Puritan and a mystic. Every morning at five o'clock he would turn out for his devotions on deck. Those grim lips, as I had suspicioned, were moving at that early hour in prayer.

But his faith left no room for that softness so falsely associated with religion. Captain Peabody stood for the manliness of Christ, for the primitive virtues of fortitude and courage.

As a matter of devotion, he did little hard things every day, glorying therein. As soon as

Tug and I came aft into the cabin, he initiated us into the same Spartan régime.

"There's one person, with whom you must wage constant warfare, and that's yourself.

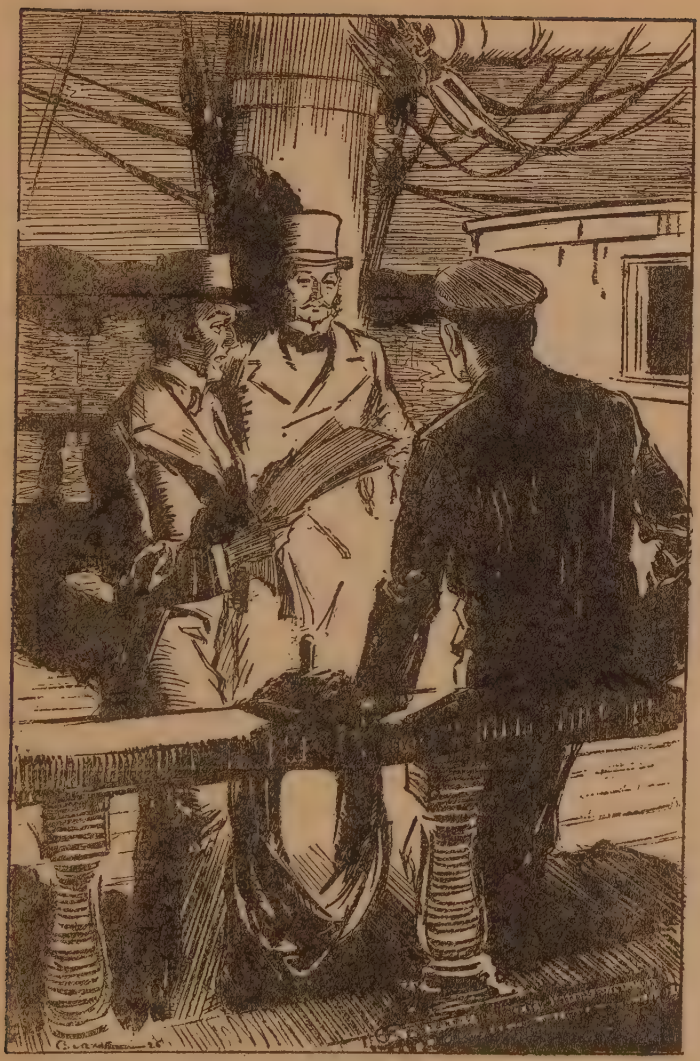
"Any dead fish can float down the stream, but it takes a live one to buck up against the current."

Navigation, weather signs, shiphandling, and other branches of the profession were taught as exact science. But there was something else that was imparted to me, not by word of mouth, so much as by living example, that something else was the art of command.

A crew will inevitably obey one man, and flaunt another, not because of knowledge or experience, but because of this art of command.

This highest art I found Captain Peabody imperceptibly imparting in the daily round. He had a way of giving orders, so that one could not help obeying. There was a finality to his word. When he had spoken, that was the end of it. He was, in truth, a veritable lawgiver, who dwelt on the Sinai of his own poop.

As time passed, I found myself more and more infused with his lonely and dominant



I Beheld a Dominating Figure That I Would Have Recognized the World Over. It Was Father!
[See page 305]

spirit. Where I had once kept company with shipmates, I now began to watch them from the high place, with them, but not of them.

Imperceptibly, I was being qualified to take on the mantle of the master.

Running our easting down, in the big seas of the roaring forties, I began my first real grappling with titanic forces. Captain Peabody's heart trouble had returned with its old threatening, for days, while we battled off the swing of the Horn, he was confined to his bed, holding life by a slender thread.

Although he was prostrated by the agony of disease, I found his presence a source of security. Even at the gates of death there was a power to Captain Peabody that could not be denied. The magic of his name alone was a subduing influence, with the most abandoned of the packet rats.

In the fog and ice of the high south latitude, I learned something of the will to dare. By the time we finally left the Falklands behind us to the westward, I was coming to feel a touch of confidence, the Captain's sickness was my only source of misgiving. If he could only hang on

to that feeble cord of life, nothing else could bring dismay.

Came the trades, blowing light at first, and setting us far to the westward, too far for us to sight the Fernando Noronha Islands, off the Brazilian coast. I was inclined to blame my navigation, for missing this accustomed landmark, but the Captain put the blame on the lightness of the trades.

For sometime our tanks were low, then, just across the line, in the region of the Doldrums, this worry was ended by terrific rains. Every bit of water that we could catch was run into casks, and finally poured into the starboard tank, which assured us a full supply of water for the remainder of the voyage.

With the coming of the North East Trades, we slanted steadily nor' nor'-west, while the balmy air brought the Captain out on deck, to stand behind me, with an eye for my slightest fault.

The North Star, welcomer of home, peeked up across the skyline, while nightly the Southern Cross sank lower in the heavens.

It seemed to me that Captain Peabody was

unduly severe, that his exactions were unreasonable, that he laid too much upon my shoulders. Then, one morning, when we were fairly into the northern latitudes, the meaning of it all was poignantly brought home to me, as we found the Skipper dead in his stateroom, having succumbed at last in that long fight against the malady of the heart.

An open Bible, and a loaded pistol, lying beside him, filled me with a certain measure of misgiving. That pistol was eloquent of unspoken dread, which Calvin Peabody carried with him to his end, and which he had now bequeathed to me.

Standing there by my dead captain, I was conscious of a sudden weight of responsibility, as his words came back,

"Men may come, and men may go, but ships must have those that are true to them, to bring them from port to port."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

NEW RÉGIME

CALVIN PEABODY, that Lawgiver who dwelt on a Sinai of his own poop, had gone from under the folds of the flag. His passing was as though a star had fallen out of heaven.

Concluding the burial service, I stood, momentarily abstracted. It was one of those rare days that come in the kiss of the trades, blue sky, blue sea, blue haze on the far horizon. In the wistfulness of the hour, I felt a certain tugging at the heart strings. Tears were welling up, unbidden, when the slatting of the unfurled royals called back the stern realities.

"Forgetting those things which are behind" is the rule of the homeward-bounder.

As I climbed the weather ladder, to take my place upon the poop, somehow, with that act, boyhood seemed to pass. The Captain when he

went took a man's life with him. Now, to succeed him was a man's command.

With Mr. MacDonald lying helpless from wounds, automatically, I found myself master of the *Flying Spray,* at the age of eighteen, coming to the enforced promotion with anything but elation.

Standing there in the place of authority, I was filled with a sense of dread at the loss of that strong, resourceful Skipper, who alone seemed adequate to cope with the mutinous spirit of our crew. But youth is always audacious, and in spite of doubts, my plan was clear.

Fearing that we would be short-handed in the after guard, I gave the order:

"Have Mr. Duggan released from his cabin, and brought up here on the quarter."

At this, Tug came over toward me, exclaiming in an amazed aside,

"Good Lord, Laurie, you're not surely going to take a chance and let that villain out. That's askin' for it."

"I know my mind, Mr. Wilson," I answered, "and henceforth, remember, there must be no

more liberties between us on the quarter deck. I am here now as Captain."

"Pardon me, Sir," said Tug, touching his cap, and passing over respectfully to his own place.

A few moments later, the bos'n came up the companion, accompanied by Duggan, who was still in irons.

On seeing me in the position of authority he could not conceal a baleful leer. Ignoring this, I said:

"Mr. Duggan, we are short-handed aft, and I do not propose to let you laze away the hours, when your services are needed on deck. You may take the irons off of him."

As the bos'n advanced to do my bidding, Duggan retreated, stubbornly.

"I ain't goin' to take no more watches aboard o' this hooker."

"Oh, yes, but you are though."

"But, I'd sooner remain under arrest."

"I don't give a rap, what you'd sooner do. I'll think of the ship first, and your whims last. We've got no room just now for passengers loafing away in the cabin. You'll work your pas-

sage from now until we get to port, and don't you forget it."

His answer was a surly growl, which I ignored, exclaiming:

"Come on now, Bos'n, get the irons off of him. Quick about it."

With the shackles off, Duggan unwillingly took his stand on the lee side, near Tug Wilson. At which I announced:

"Mr. Duggan, you are to act as first mate. Mr. Wilson will take second mate's place. Now, then, muster all hands for picking new watches."

As the crew came trooping aft, I noticed unmistakable signs of trouble among the packet rats. The mutiny which Captain Peabody had suppressed with a high hand was obviously ready to flame out again.

Resolved to draw their teeth at once, before they had a chance to strike, I called Orlando Schofield, the carpenter, my trusty friend of the midship house. Taking him to one side, I gave instructions:

"While we are picking the watches, I want you and Sails, to go through the fo'c'sle thoroughly, and search for every possible

weapon of offense which you can find there."

"Leave it to us," said Chips, and straightway went forward on his mission.

Coming to the edge of the poop, word was then given to proceed with the picking of the watches, a procedure which might have seemed unnecessary, but I had my own strategy.

Tug Wilson's first choice was the reliable Red, while Duggan gave himself away by choosing One-thumbed Jerry.

All through the picking of the watches, understanding signals were passing between Duggan and his choice spirits. I noticed this, but said nothing, until the whole thing was completed, then, detecting the packet rats and their new first officer passing surreptitious signals, I declared:

"Mr. Duggan, on account of your seniority, I made you mate. But as you show openly that there is collusion between you and your watch, you are reduced to second. Mr. Wilson you will take his watch as first, while he will exchange with yours as second."

By this ruse, I had the rogues under a reliable officer, and the crooked mate played with a

reliable watch, thus creating a sort of a checkmate the one against the other.

Seeing that Chips and Sails were still busy for'ard on their important job, to gain time, I stepped to the rail and delivered my mind to the new watchmates.

"Men, by the unfortunate death of Captain Peabody I have come to his place. I want to tell you that the change of command will not cause the slightest change in the ongoing of this clipper.

"You will get good food, as before. Plenty of work, and watch and watch, if you behave yourselves. If not, you know what to expect.

"I noticed that as you came aft, some of you were not respectful in manner. Well, that kind of thing will not be tolerated. Pick up your heels when you walk, none of this shuffling around like paralytics. Say Sir, when you are spoken to, and don't forget to jump when you receive an order.

"I know you think I am young, and for that reason you hope to be able to take advantage of me. But you had better be warned at the start not to try. The position of captain knows

not age nor youth, the only thing that counts now is to get this clipper back to port with utmost expedition. When we arrive in New York, I can promise you your due share of the prize money, from the cargo which we have salved.

"Do your duty from now until capstan payment, and you will be well rewarded."

Seeing Chips, at that moment dumping a load of murderous looking weapons into the sea, I was relieved by the consciousness that in the event of hostilities breaking out, we had at least drawn their teeth, beforehand.

Suddenly aware of this temporary advantage which I had gained, One-thumbed Jerry stood forward menacingly:

"What do you want?"

"We wants to know how much o' the gold youse is goin' to divvy up wid the crew."

This was followed by a general chorus from the Bloodies.

"Aye, what's our share a-goin' to be?"

"Where d'we come in?"

"Speak up, an' tell us."

"You've heard before that it's not the custom

to run a debating society on this quarter-deck," I countered.

"But, we only asks fer our rights."

One-thumbed Jerry, loud-mouthed and insolent, was again edging to the fore, when Tug's famous uppercut caught him in the nasal cartilage, with about as devastating effect as a kick from a horse's hoof.

In the same instant, several other of the more vicious of the packet rats started to avenge their mate.

Finnigen came first, mad as a whirling Dervish, he promised to eat the heart and gizzard out of Tug Wilson, but before he could get near enough to open hostilities, a neat one on the tip of the chin suddenly arrested his bluster, and with knees sagging he crashed backwards, like a door ripped off its hinges.

While Finnigen was being dispatched, one Gilhooley rushed in under Tug's guard, with butting tactics, and started to use his head to smash in the other's ribs.

I was momentarily apprehensive, but Tug had his counter even for the dirty tricks, catching Gilhooley in the back of the neck with the

crook of his elbow he turned that individual into a dead sack of potatoes.

With three of their loudest blusterers laid out cold there was an apparent hesitation among the Bloodies. Sensing this advantage, I called out, decisively:

"Starboard main braces, yards up."

The good watch started willingly enough, and with Tug Wilson suddenly disclosing the fact that he packed a terrible wallop, even the Bloodies decided to obey.

With the main yards coming round in good style, I had the satisfaction of realizing that my command was back upon her course once more.

CHAPTER XXXIX

"DRIVE HER, JOHNNIE! DRIVE HER!"

NOT every master, no matter how good a sailor, had the courage, endurance, and patience to drive a California clipper. This was the golden age of sail, a dashing, headlong era which demanded captains with iron nerve.

At this time, with the Yankee shipmaster, daring ruled supreme, leading up to that grand old maxim, "A bold man seldom gets hurt."

Our clipper was like a blooded race horse with whims and vagaries all her own. When caught in a heavy press of sail, one followed in her case exactly the opposite from the conventional course.

In a sudden squall, Captain Peabody's order was:

"Luff her up, and shake the wind out of her."

Woe betide the timid officer who in such a

crisis should attempt to put his helm up and run before it. Such action this high-stepper would not tolerate. As she fell off the wind, she gathered way in an instant, and with her sharply braced yards catching the weight of it, she laid right over until her fairleads were almost in the water. The unlucky master, who got caught in this predicament, had to keep his hair on the best way he could.

To feel a racing clipper going over until her lee rail was under,—and one had an idea that she was not going to stop at that, was anything but soothing to the nerves. Of course the wise master knew better than to let this happen.

The records of the Yankee clippers, established for all time, were records of ships. But, beyond that, they were records of men. The master, himself, was really the pivot on whom turned good or bad passages. Realizing this, I was on my toes from the start.

Following the example of good sailors, I took a nap after dinner, in order to be fresh to keep the deck at night. With the glass falling, indications pointed to blowing weather.

Before the afternoon watch was over, every stitch of canvas had been shaken out. Day, going out before its time, beheld the *Flying Spray* racing over a maddening ocean under a lurid sky.

There was no twilight glow as I came on deck for the night watch.

"Only just past eight bells, and already black as the inside of a boot, we're in for it," muttered Tug, as we met in the waist.

The breeze had now grown to half a gale, the wind music in the shrouds, and the eternal roar of scuppers, together with the increasing gloom served to fill some with a sense of impending dread.

Hard sailing at night, with everything lugged on, was the utmost test of the Yankee clipper. It was the custom of this period for English ships to shorten down at night. But the New England tradition was to "crack on", and if anything, to drive her hardest through the hours of darkness.

Aboard the *Flying Spray,* we were living up to the Yankee name. Under a tremendous press, the clipper went over and over, until in the

fiercest onslaughts the seas were foaming level with the hatches. For'ard of the midship house, it was unliveable with bursting seas.

Gazing aloft at this awe-inspiring sight, some began to have doubts about their new captain, muttering:

"That's carryin' on too far."

"He'll crack the sticks out o' her yet."

Sensitive to these muttered remarks, Duggan ventured:

"Hadn't ye better take in them top kites, Sir?"

"Take in nothing," I answered.

The importuning note in Duggan's voice perhaps caused me to hang on just a little longer. At length, noticing that the seas were rising, and that she was losing headway by the rolling, I called out:

"Let go your royal halyards."

As the main royal yard came down to the masthead, I ordered:

"All right, Jerry, up you go and stow that sail."

With the clipper jumping into the sea to her knightheads, and the tall skysail poles bent like

coaching whips, One-thumbed Jerry hung back, reluctant.

"Go on, you."

"No, I ain't."

"What?"

"I ain't goin' on no royal yard what's goin' to break off any minute."

"Get up there with you."

"I won't," screamed Jerry, retreating with a note of terror.

Behind him, there came a note of dissent, while some one snarled:

"Send a man up where he wouldn't go hisself."

Stung by this remark, without an instant's hesitation, I started for the main rigging. With an order to Tug to take charge below, I leaped into the shrouds, and raced aloft, stowing the royal in quick time.

When at last I arrived back on deck, I was mad right through from the taunt of the packet rats. The conflict on the eerie yard had put me on my fighting edge, and once back again in the waist, I found myself impelled in the direction of One-thumbed Jerry.

Seeing me coming, he drew his knife. As he stabbed with the broken point, I dodged, and seizing his wrist tore the weapon from his grasp, then, drawing off I gave him the only language that he could understand.

Smack! Bang! Smack!

Against the jaw, under the eye, in the nose. With the last, he went down, but came back kicking and lashing, with murderous abuse.

Smack! Bang!

Again he went down, and this time, with a sickening thud, at which the impudence suddenly melted out of him.

"Had enough?"

"Ya."

"All right, then, get up there on that main royal, and don't waste any time about it."

Almost before the order was given, he was dancing heel and toe through the futtocks.

"And now, then, let that be a lesson for the rest of you." I announced, for the benefit of all hands. "I send no man anywhere aboard this clipper, where I wouldn't go myself. But when an order's given, it's going to be obeyed, d'ye understand?"

A general, "Aye, aye, Sir," told me that the example of One-thumbed Jerry had not failed.

At midnight, with the glass still falling, I gave the order:

"All hands on deck, to shorten sail."

From below, Tug gave back a cheery answer, and in a moment I heard him rousing out the other watch, and driving them to it with a will.

"Haul in weather braces, as soon as t'gallants are furled."

"Aye, aye, Sir."

"Here's an old whistler comin'" someone called, as a black squall came racing down upon us.

"Stand by, all hands," bellowed Tug.

"Take the cro'jack of her," I shouted.

"Reef the fores'l."

With the howling night raging at us, we finally had her under topsails and reefed foresail.

All through the night, we drove before it under short canvas. With the coming on of dawn, the *Flying Spray* appeared more like a half tide rock than a merchant vessel. Putting her lee scuppers into a seething mass of foam,

she fairly boiled along, her cathead buried beneath a mountain of gray-green water.

Harder than ever blew the wind, and the seas came rolling along in vast sloping hills, as high as the topsail yards. The note of the wind sounded with a high unending roar.

Standing in the lee of the wheel-box, looking astern, I noticed that the gulls, the strongest birds that fly, were unable to make headway, but kept close down in the trough of the swells.

By midday, the gale had increased so that we had her under topsails, and forestaysail only. With the heavy squalls, and high seas running, even this demanded constant vigilance.

At the change of watches, Tug took all hands from one end of the clipper to the other and made them clap a tackle on all braces and sheets, and haul them taut as fiddle strings. Many were waiting for the crack of spars, and the sound of bursting canvas, at this incredible driving. But the gear aloft was sound, and, as I expected, held against the fiercest strain.

I was not altogether satisfied at having her under such short canvas, and when Duggan, who was developing cold feet, began suggest-

ing a reef in the topsails, his word had the opposite from the desired effect.

Feeling a slight moderation in the weight of the wind, against my cheek, I shouted:

"Shake out your mains'l, and fores'l, Mister."

The astounded Duggan could not refrain from an exclamation of dismay.

"What?"

"Yes, shake em out," I bellowed.

When this task was accomplished, Duggan again began to evidence his yellow streak, approaching me like a suppliant, whining out:

"Ye've got too much on her. She'll be runnin' her bows under, Sir. Better snug her down, before its too late."

Thoroughly nettled, by this blustering coward, I sang:

"Get the t'gallants on her. Walk 'em to the masthead, now."

With the seas moderating, and the rolling of the vessel easing, we finally put the royals to her, again, and then the mizzen staysail.

Under a mounting cloud of canvas, I listened to the loud high thumming of the gear, betokening wholesome strain and stress. With sun-

light glistening on her piled up canvas, with the steady roar of sea leagues trampled down astern, the *Flying Spray* sang with the joy of the homeward-bounder.

Between me and this high-stepping clipper, there had sprung up a sympathy that was almost human. She would rebel against over pressure, or tampering with her trim. But she gave her best to those who understood her. In months of service, I had learned something of her mystery. Sensitive to every yard of canvas, thrilling to every touch of tack, or brace, or sheet, here was a beauty that demanded wooing.

Early in the afternoon, another clipper was sighted on the northern horizon. She was under topsails only, and we overhauled her rapidly, as we were then sporting everything up to our royals.

The lookout sighted this other vessel at two bells of the afternoon watch. In a couple of hours we had come up with her, and by the end of the first dog-watch we had passed her hull down over the horizon.

At her best that afternoon, with a strong southerly piping in earnest, the *Flying Spray*

was logging sixteen knots in one hour, with her lee rail under, and her lee rigging slack.

Such wild driving was too much for the overwrought nerves of Mr. Duggan who, while I was below, finally took it upon himself to shorten sail. Before his task was completed, I emerged from the companion.

With his watch already tailing onto the halyard, I sang out:

"What are you doing there, Mister?"

"Lowerin' away on the royals, Sir."

"Did I give you orders to do that?"

"No."

"All right, shake 'em out, again."

Hearing a muttered remonstrance from a familiar quarter, I sang out:

"And you, Jerry, get up there and pass a couple o' rovings on that fore royal."

This time One-thumbed Jerry did not wait to argue.

CHAPTER XL

A SLEEPING CALM

IN the region of the Gulf Stream we ran into unusual light airs, drifting across that submarine river that marks two climes, passing in brief order from tropical heat to the vigorous coolness of an American autumn.

On the fifteenth day of September, pining for the sight of home, we lay rolling in an oily calm, with a heavy swell coming up from the southeast.

There would come a lull for perhaps a quarter of an hour, and then that heavy rolling would begin again. Without warning the clipper would go over with a terrific jangling of sails and gear. These deep-troughed seas kept rolling in continually, with not a breath of air stirring.

In such a calm, one could not rest. Everything appeared expectant, waiting.

During the day it seemed to me that there was an especial activity among the packet rats, for which reason I was particular to keep them at it, working without so much as a daytime watch below, getting the clipper in shape for a harbor stow.

Standing on the poop while the bos'n was overseeing a job of polishing and scrubbing, I observed that there was an excessive amount of whispering and gossiping among certain characters like Finnigen and Paddy Maguire.

Once, I called out to the bos'n:

"Can't you keep them at their work?"

As though to show his contempt for my authority, One-thumbed Jerry suddenly straightened up, burst into a loud guffaw, and spat insolently upon the deck. Then, with utmost deliberation, he turned and demanded loudly:

"What's the pup cap think he's doin', anyways?"

With fists burning to smash him, I yearned to jump down into the waist, but my better judgment warned me to keep to my place on the poop.

To add to the uneasiness, the packet rats winked knowingly, while one of them muttered:

"We'll git 'im, yet!"

Something in that uneasy calm seemed to couple itself with the threatening actions of the crew.

"Don't like the look o' 'em," observed the Bosun. "There's trouble brewin', an' no mistakin' it."

After the evening meal, I went into the cabin to load my pistols, intending to hold the bridge throughout the night.

While I was still working with the pistols, a great haze seemed to be descending on me. I fought it off, saying, repeatedly:

"I must go on deck! I must go on deck!"

But even as I was uttering these words, my bunk reached forth to claim me, and that was the last I knew.

When I came to again, it was broad daylight. I opened my eyes, blankly at first, seeing nothing. Then, it became clear that someone was shaking me back to consciousness. There was

a burning sensation in my head, a desire to sleep, and never awaken.

But the person who was shaking me was persistent, and I became conscious that it was Tug Wilson.

"Wake up! Wake up, old man!"

"What's mat'r?"

A strong drink of black coffee, gradually cleared the fumes out of my head.

"Feelin' better?"

"Aye, an' what's up?"

"Hell's up! They put laudanum, or something in our tea last night, and everybody aboard that's worth trusting has been sleeping the clock round."

In an instant, I jumped up, alarmed, and fully awakened:

"And where are the rest of 'em?"

"Come on, I'll show you."

Following Tug's lead, I came out on deck at the run, to find the sun about two hours up from the horizon, while the uneasy calm continued.

The first thing that struck my eye was the absence of the boats from for'ard, from the mid-

ship house, and from the quarter. Every boat was gone, the falls trailing from the davits, telling their story more plainly than words.

"Have you looked in the storeroom?" I asked.

"Aye, they've stripped the gold to the last ounce, not so much as a pinch of dust remains."

So this was our gold at the end of the rainbow!

Tug and I were looking at each other, with a disappointment too deep for words, when the others began to appear, each one joining in the general lament.

While they were all at it, expressing their grief and indignation, I cast my eye casually toward the south-east, where an overhanging grayness appeared to be growing denser and darker across the morning sky.

Now and then, a quick light puff would fan our faces, causing me to exclaim:

"Here comes a breeze."

But the words were hardly out of my mouth, before it struck dead calm again.

I was beginning to study the horizon intently, when something in that gray south-east caused me to forget mere incidents like gold.

CHAPTER XLI

HURRICANE

A BANK of cloud was rising in the southeast, growing slowly, almost imperceptibly, but as it grew, I had never seen a more ominous portent.

Rushing down into the cabin, I took a hurried glance at the barometer, which had dropped to 28.4. In frantic haste I came bounding back onto the poop, where the bos'n met me.

On hearing how the glass had fallen, he showed instant alarm.

"What do you make of it?" I inquired.

"It's plain as day. A falling glass, a dead calm, and this September. Any fool ought to be able to read them signs, a hurricane is right onto us!"

Not waiting for any further word I gave the order:

"All hands on deck to shorten sail!"

In an instant, the bos'n was repeating the order in thunderous tones, rushing hither and yon, to spur the crew.

"Lively now, lively!"

"Git a move on there!"

Still occupied over the loss of gold, the crew were responding in an indifferent manner, when the bos'n bellowed:

"Here's a hurricane, right onto us!"

This word of warning was sufficient to electrify all hands, setting them hauling at the clew lines like demons, while the sails seemed to rise to the yards by magic.

Belaying the falls furiously, they raced aloft and out onto the yards, where the bos'n led the way in passing extra gaskets, and making everything doubly secure.

In jig time, the crew, working like furies, had taken everything off of her, but foresail, main topsail, and mizzen staysail. Although we were short-handed, in the crisis, speed seemed to make up for lack of numbers.

Meanwhile, the puffs of wind increasing,

started the clipper into steering, which was our salvation.

"Hand to the wheel," I called.

At that word, the bos'n came shooting down the mizzen backstay, to take upon himself that most important task.

With the wind increasing rapidly, he soon had the clipper steering a quarter course, the object being, as he told me, to run out of the hurricane as its track was not wide. Here was a case where experience counted.

As the last man came down from aloft, I called:

"Is everything secure?"

"Aye, aye, Sir."

"Then, each one take his station to man the main topsail braces, and see that you have something to hang onto at a moment's notice."

The bos'n and I had already lashed ourselves, so as not to be swept away.

In the ensuing lull, we were like troops awaiting imminent attack. To say that we were not frightened would be disguising the truth. We knew that a terrible experience was in store

for us. We had done all we could, nothing remained but to wait, the most trying ordeal of all.

In the midst of that awful suspense of waiting, there came suddenly a shouted alarm.

"Look! Look!"

"What is it?"

"My God, there's the packet rats, coming back!"

Gazing in the direction indicated, under the fast advancing cloud of blackness, I descried a number of tiny specks, bobbing up and down upon the rollers.

Grabbing the spyglass by the binnacle, I made out beyond question, the boats that had stolen the gold. They had evidently not gotten far with their plunder when the threatenings caused them to come about. Realizing their peril, they were now striving frantically to get back to the clipper before the hurricane should burst upon them.

Meanwhile, the oncoming rage of clouds was turning into a whirling gray mist, spreading over the ocean, coming towards us in a vast panorama of flying white feathers. As I stood

aghast, the tiny white boats were just in front of that charging whiteness.

I was still looking through the glass, fascinated by the impending tragedy, when, without warning I saw those tiny specks vanish like candles snuffed in darkness.

From the plight of the packet rats, I was called back to our own immediate danger.

"Bring her up to meet it."

The order was hardly given before a perfect onslaught of thunder, lightning, wind and rain burst upon us.

The whole sea was suddenly a mass of seething foam, presenting the appearance of one unending breaker, while the sky looked doubly black in contrast to the milk-white sea.

From somewhere there came a rumbling, roaring, terrifying sound, resembling heavy breakers, and the crash of tumbling water. While, stranger still, it had become dark as night.

"What's that?"

"Tidal wave! Right on us! Hang on for your lives!"

Scarcely had we carried out the precaution, when, by a lightning flash, I saw a mountain of

water, rolling, tossing, tumbling, as if ready to sweep to eternity all that stood before it.

Higher and higher the comber rose, with a foam-white boiling crest, hanging there for one awful moment, and then it crashed down upon us.

If the heavens had caved in, the shock could not have been more complete. With the deadly thunder of water in my ears, I hung on, feeling that this was the end. Then, the weight seemed to be lifting, and almost suffocated, I came gasping out into the air.

The clipper was so deep in the water that all the life had gone out of her. From where we stood on the poop, nothing was visible save the fo'c'sle head, rising like a lonely rock in a weltering sea. In that moment, the hull seemed to be settling beneath our feet.

"She's gone!" I gasped, and then, as if to give the lie to my word, she quivered, and started to come up.

"Are we done?"

"Nay, she'll make it," answered the bos'n "She's a storm bird. She'll come through, just watch her."

True to the bos'n's prophecy, the grand old girl shook herself clear, and rose weakly, to meet the next assault.

Following on the heels of the tidal wave was the wind with its hurricane force. The flying spume came over the rail and lashed us with whips of steel, while the wind was passing in a deep humming roar.

Under the clew of the main topsail, we finally hove her to, and the clipper lay with her lee rail completely under water.

When the wind first struck, it bore us down nearly on our beam ends, broadside to the wind. But the pressure of the lee clew of the main-topsail slowly brought her head up to the wind, and according to the word of the bos'n, the old boat began to prove herself "a storm bird" in the truest sense.

About noon, the steward called out that he had some hot broth ready for me in the cabin. Thoroughly exhausted, I was starting on the broth when the cabin windows were crashed in by a boarding sea, flooding the place knee high with water.

Rushing up through the after companion, I

was just in time to see another comber, swelling up ahead like a great green hillside. It kept rising and rising until we could discern it over the fore yard.

I thought from the look of it that we would surely be buried to the lower yards, but the clipper's bows rose gallantly and drove right into the crashing top of that green hill.

In the lulls between the seas, we finally succeeded in boarding up the cabin windows. But our troubles were far from ended. As the intensity of the wind began to abate, the sea began to rise, until it was breaking continually over the weather rail, keeping the main deck buried, so that she could not free herself, and was rising more and more sluggishly, as the seas grew larger.

"Either we've got to clear the maindeck, or we'll founder. There's nothin' for it, but to knock off the bulwark planking," said the bos'n.

At imminent risk, between the lulls, moving along the maindeck, we finally succeeded in knocking out the planking of our lee bulwarks, at safe places. Thus, the clipper was

enabled to shake herself free of each sea, as fast as it came aboard. With her decks clear of this stifling weight, she gradually righted herself, and rose buoyant as ever.

The tension lasted throughout a day and a night. By the following morning the worst was over, and we were able again to make sail and set the watches.

For breakfast that morning the steward served us a hot meal which tasted like a banquet after thirty-six hours of water-soaked hard-tack.

The clipper did not strain badly, and suffered no damage except the loss of foresail and mizzen staysail, and the knocked-out bulwarks.

Coming out on deck after breakfast, there was a bracing tang in the air. Sky and sea seemed to have been swept clear at dawn. Only the deep-troughed rollers, and occasional lace work of foam, told of the storm that had passed.

In that sparkling and translucent air one suddenly discovered the sheer joyousness of being. It was heaven just to be alive on such a morning.

I was standing by the wheel, rejoicing that

we were on our course again, when the lookout called:

"Lifeboat, two points on the port bow!"

Picking up the spyglass, I discerned plainly one of our own boats, floating bottom upwards, telling its story unmistakably.

A great horror filled me, as I thought of the fate of the packet rats, and coupled with that horror was a sudden loathing at the thought of the gold.

Laying down the glass, I took in deep breaths of that clean, clear air. Yes it was good to be alive. With everything drawing on the homeward trail, a profound thankfulness welled up within. With a sigh of relief, I exclaimed:

"They're welcome to it."

"Welcome to what?" inquired Tug.

My answer was to point in the direction of the capsized lifeboat.

CHAPTER XLII

SEA PRICE

"With eyes grown dim from watching
The sun-wash on the brine,
I am paid in full for service,
Would that service still were mine."
—*Kipling.*

LIGHT on the port bow, Sir."

"All right," I answered calmly. But at the meaning of that flash,I wanted to yell like some harum-scarum just released from school.

We had raised the Navesink, the outermost Atlantic signal of my native land.

Upon the fo'c'sle head, there was an excited rush of feet, while someone sent back a loud, "Hurrah!"

The flash of the Navesink was the first peep of shore which we had had since the high coast of Staten Land went down astern in Cape Horn fog.

Remembering oft-repeated instructions, I had been faithful to the three L's of navigation, Log, Lead, and Latitude. Now, on the last lap, I had paid greatest attention to the lead.

"When coming onto soundings in thick weather keep your lead going."

This was the word of Captain Peabody, having regard to the thickness of the weather, I lived up to it to the letter.

Making a first landfall, from half way round the world, is the most exacting variety of long-distance shooting. To miss the mark means shipwreck and disaster. Realizing this I took no chances.

When Tug muttered against the eternal sounding drill, I replied:

"Better be safe than sorry."

As the flash of the Navesink dimmed again in the encompassing fog, a schooner bobbed across our bows, and fifteen minutes later a New York Pilot was guiding us through the thick gloom past Sandy Hook, and in toward the Narrows.

On account of the fog, we finally came to anchor late in the afternoon at Gravesend Bay,

while a quarantine boat, which boarded us, agreed to report the *Flying Spray* to her owners.

Walking up and down upon the poop, after supper, I could hardly believe that our voyage was really ended. Strange feelings came over me as I thought of the changes which the voyage had wrought. Nine months ago I had sailed away. Looking back, those months seemed like so many years.

The space of those nine months marked out for me the transition from boyhood into manhood.

Lean, bronzed, hard-fisted, I was a vastly different person from the soft, irresponsible youth who had sailed away on a madcap venture.

I was returning empty-handed, as I had embarked. The air-castles and dreams of our golden Odyssey had dissolved like morning mist. But there was no regret. I had paid according to the Sea's exaction, and that grim hard usurer had given back her recompense.

A stiffness in the spine, a lightness on the feet, a sting between the shoulder blades, told of

physical well-being undreamed of in those indulgent days at home.

The mother's darling, who had always been instructed to keep his rubbers under the stove, could now endure the fiercest onslaught of wind and weather, could sleep in sopping water upon the hardest deck, could eat his whack of salt grub, could contribute his share of "beef" at the end of a halyard, could find his way blindfold to the spidery heights.

And this was not all. Restraint and mastery had registered within still deeper changes.

I began to wonder if the folks at home would recognize me.

Still wondering over the changes that we would all find on the morrow, I turned in, and weary from the day's exactions was soon dead to the world.

Toward midnight, sleeping lightly, I was awakened by the sound of footsteps on the poop, while a strange voice floated down through the cabin sky-light.

"Is Captain Peabody aboard?"

"No, Sir."

"What happened to him?"

"He died o' heart trouble while we was still down there in the Nor'-east Trades."

"Was he sick long?"

"Aye he was ailin' most o' the voyage."

"And, where's the acting Captain, then?"

"There he is."

The bos'n, who had been giving the information, pointed in my direction, as I just then emerged from the companion.

Advancing, the stranger shook me by the hand, inquiring genially:

"So you're the master?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Well, we're glad to welcome you back. And now, Captain, will you just sign these papers."

"What's this for?"

"For the Owners."

Going over toward a lantern in the mizzen rigging, I affixed my name to the documents, and handed them back to the clerk, who glanced at them casually at first, and then, scarcely believing his eyes, he exclaimed with amazement:

"What! Lawrence Curtis!"

At the mention of my name, a large man, who

had just come over the side, suddenly rushed forward.

"That can't be Lawrence?"

Wheeling about, I beheld a dominating figure that I would have recognized the world over.

Instinctively, I called out:

"Father!"

CHAPTER XLIII

"CHIP OFF THE OLD BLOCK"

AS soon as we had retired to the privacy of the cabin, my Father placed his arms around me in an embrace of whelming affection. He was not the kind to show his feelings lightly, and I was moved to see two large tears trickling down his austere countenance.

Brushing them away with the back of his sleeve, he exclaimed: "Have to excuse me, Lawrence, if I seem to be a bit old womanish: it's on account of your Mother."

"And how is she?" I inquired, eagerly.

"Wonderful. She's kept fine and brave ever since you went. I was the one that got broken up."

"I don't understand, Father."

"Well, your Mother always declared that you were coming back. Hers was the courage, the

faith. While I, on the other hand, was hopeless, believing that we had lost our boy forever.

"And to tell the truth, I guess we have." As he made this remark, he began to feel the bulge of iron-hard muscle around my arm and chest.

"Aye, we've lost our boy," he repeated with mock grief. "We've lost him, all right, and in his stead we've got back a man."

"Which would you sooner have, Father?"

For answer, he gave me a cuff, about as gentle as that of a grizzly.

"I used to tell your Mother, Lawrence, that the Hawse-Pipe University was better than all the Harvards that ever happened. Dunno as we would 'ave sent you there. But now that Providence has intervened on your behalf, we'll have to admit that that's the school for manly men.

"Salt water always proved a Curtis, always showed what kind o' stuff was in 'em. It looked to me as though you were going to be spoiled at the start by too much apron strings and mollycoddle, but now, I'll have to take that back."

Again my Father's hand rested approvingly upon me. "Pretty well shouldered up under that jacket, eh, son?"

"A chip off the old block," he mused, "ain't no mistakin' it."

THE END